



2 OF 5

PAUL TOBIN

THE

PIOTR KOWALSKI

WITCHER

CURSE OF CROWS



FROM THE STORY
TEAM THAT BROUGHT YOU
THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT!

THE WITCHER[®]

CURSE OF CROWS

— 2 OF 5 —

STORY

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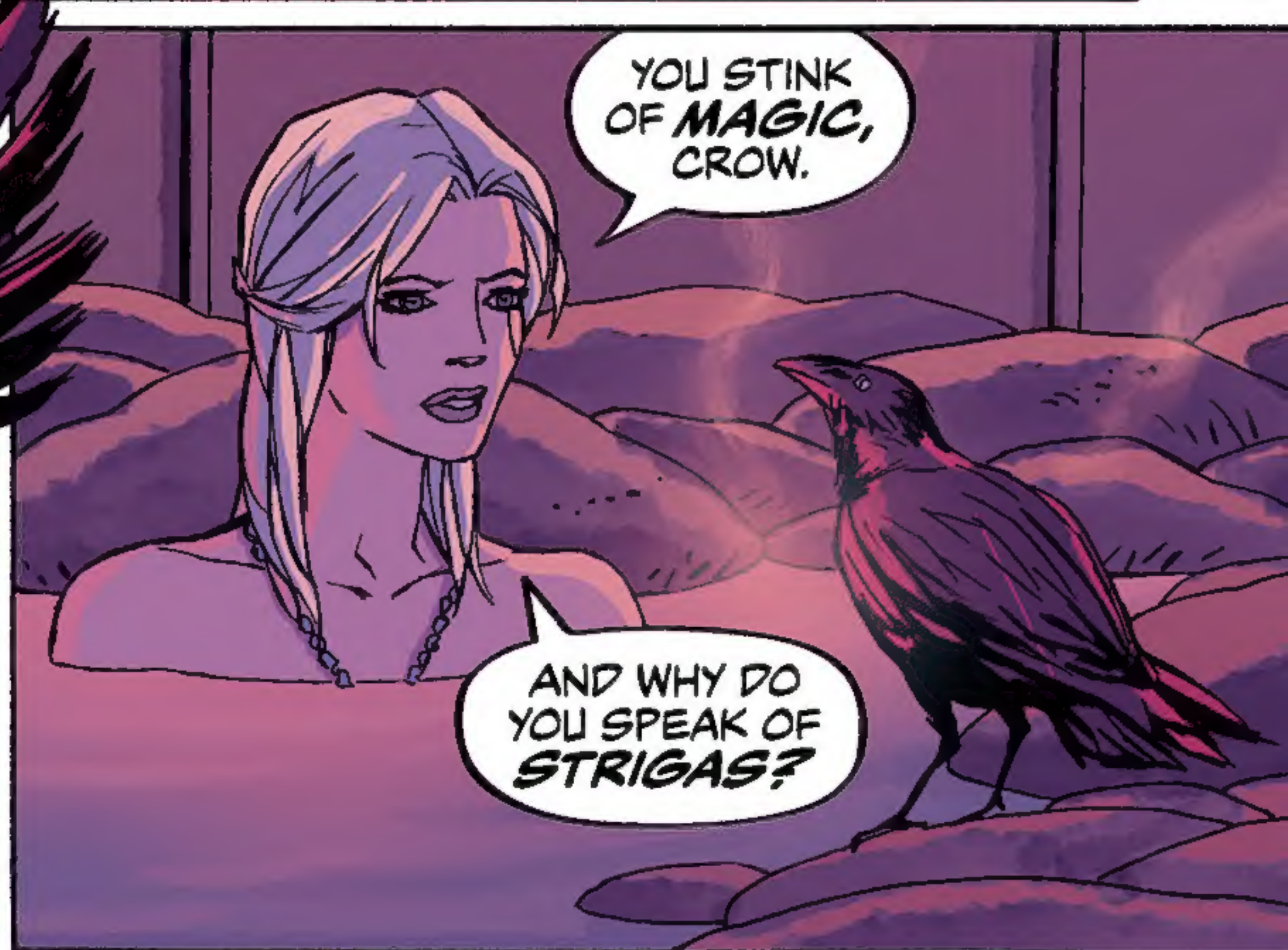
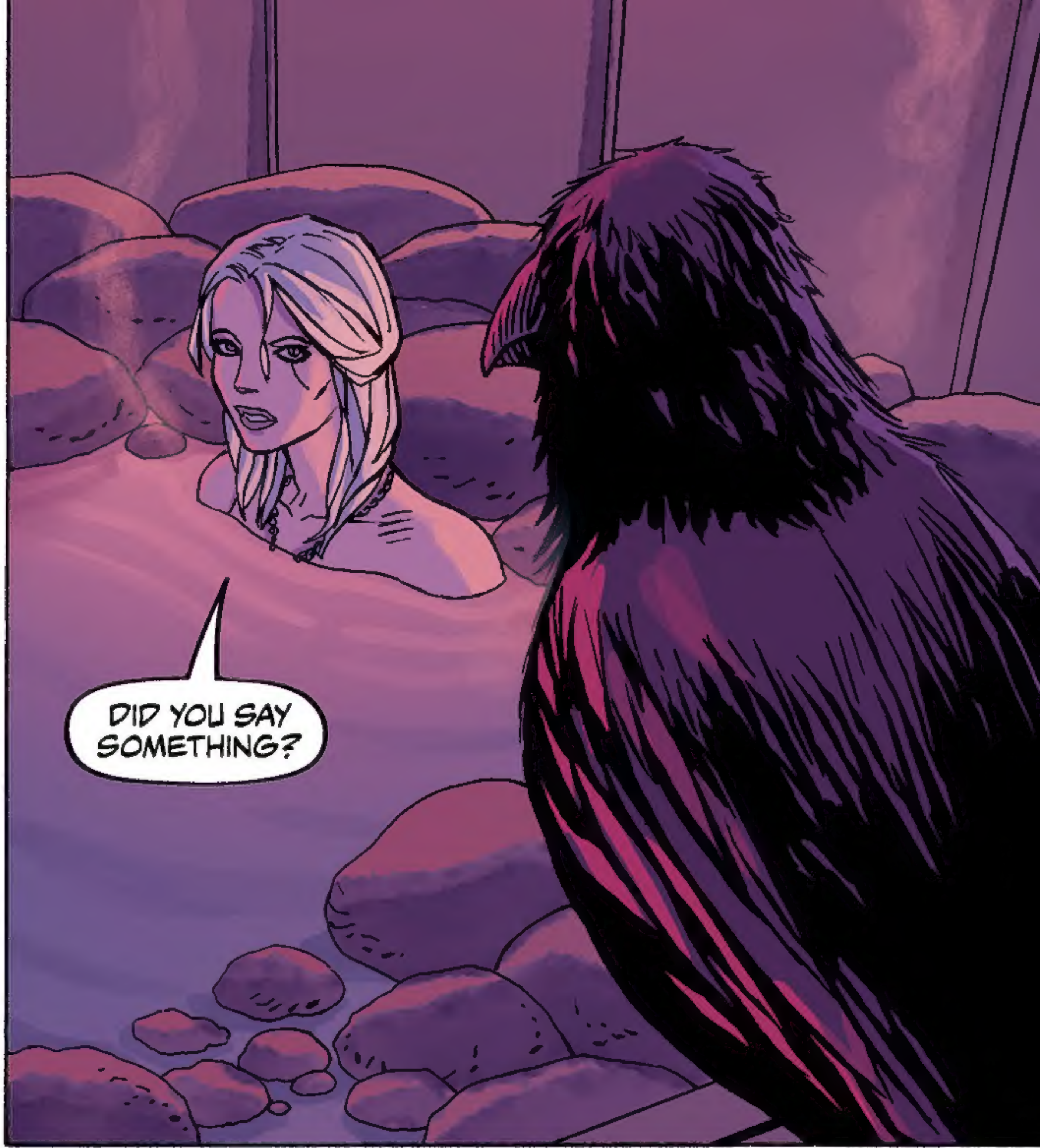
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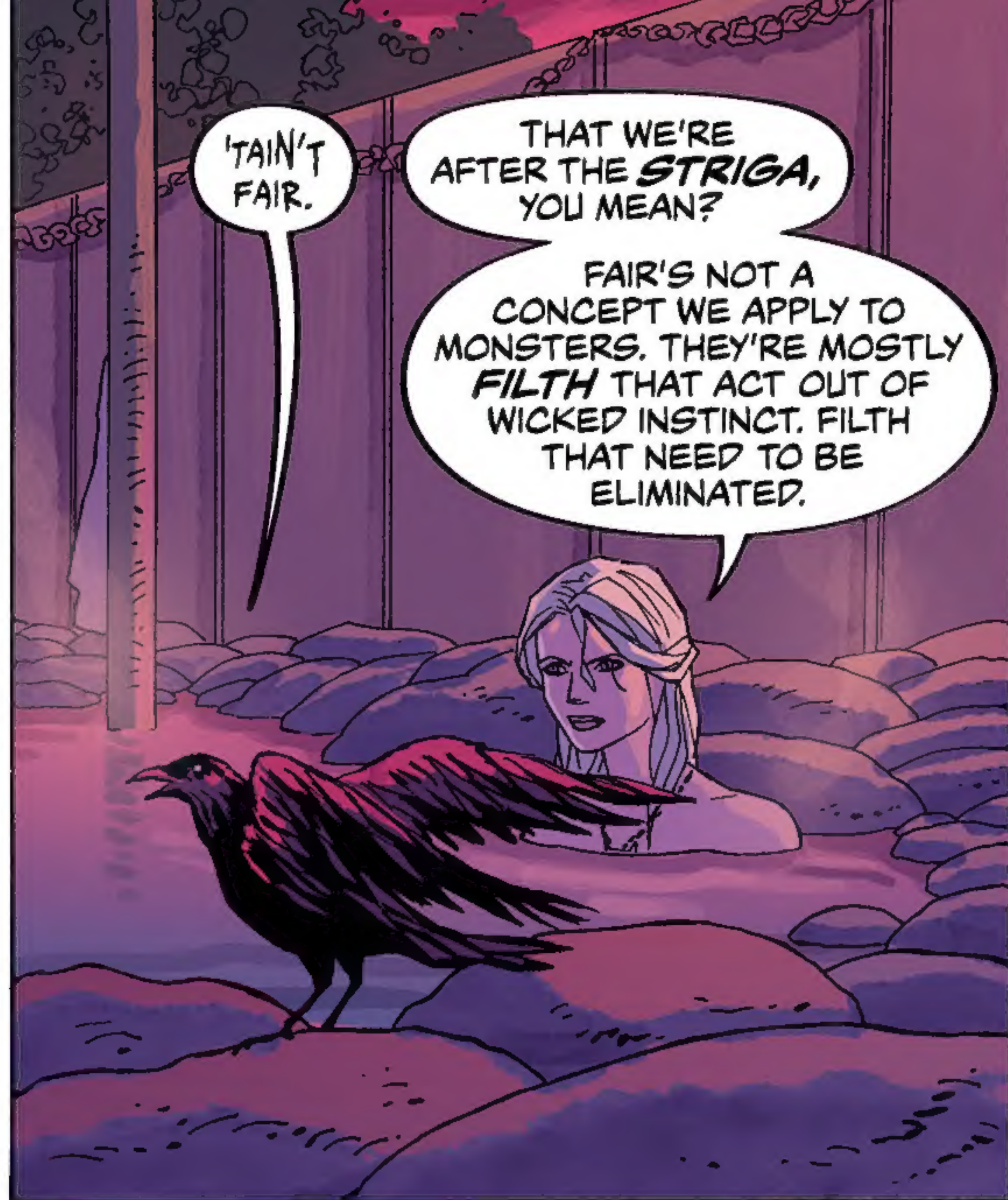
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'TAIN'T FAIR.

THAT WE'RE AFTER THE **STRIGA**, YOU MEAN?

FAIR'S NOT A CONCEPT WE APPLY TO MONSTERS. THEY'RE MOSTLY **FILTH** THAT ACT OUT OF WICKED INSTINCT. FILTH THAT NEED TO BE ELIMINATED.



BATHHOUSES AIN'T FAIR. SWARMS OF PRETTY WENCHES. OTHER WENCHES JUST WALK IN AND LOOK. ALL THE TIME, LOOK.

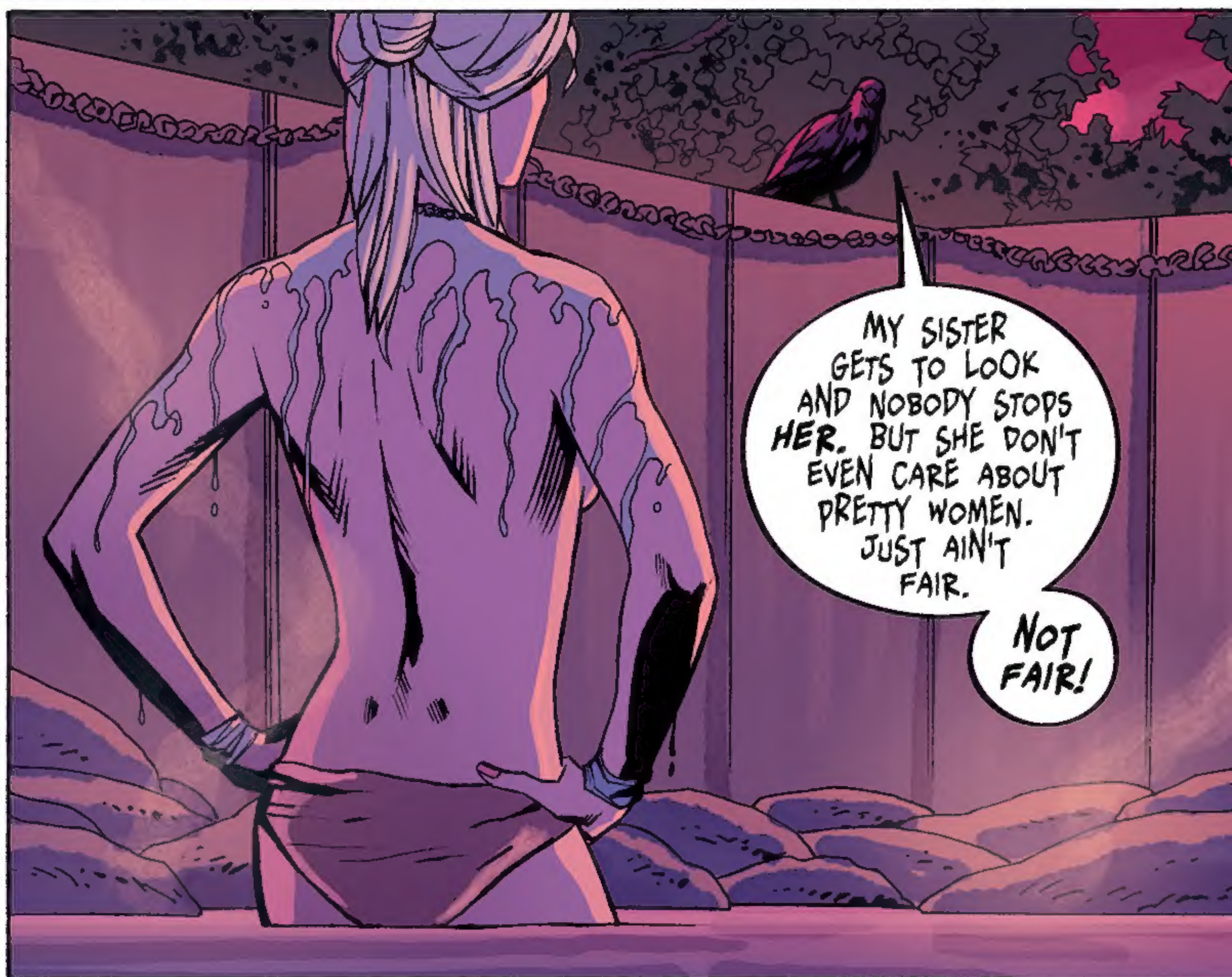
NOT A ONE GETS MAD.



'CEPT AT ME. I CAN'T GO IN AND LOOK.

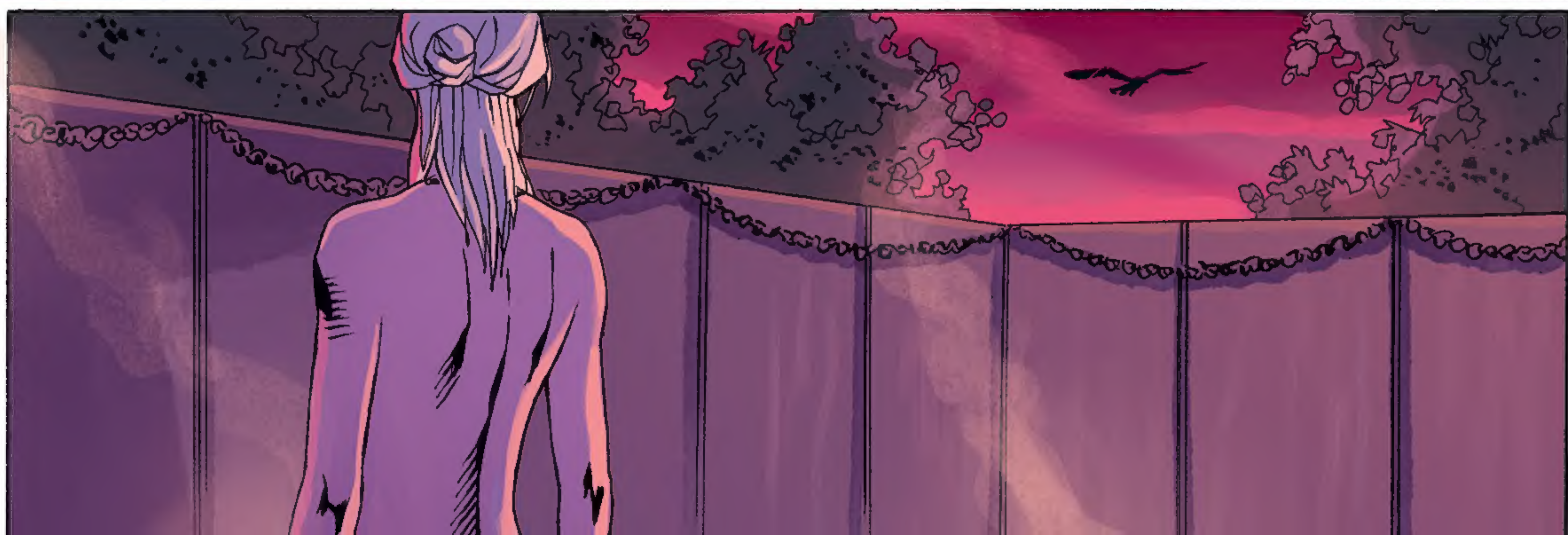
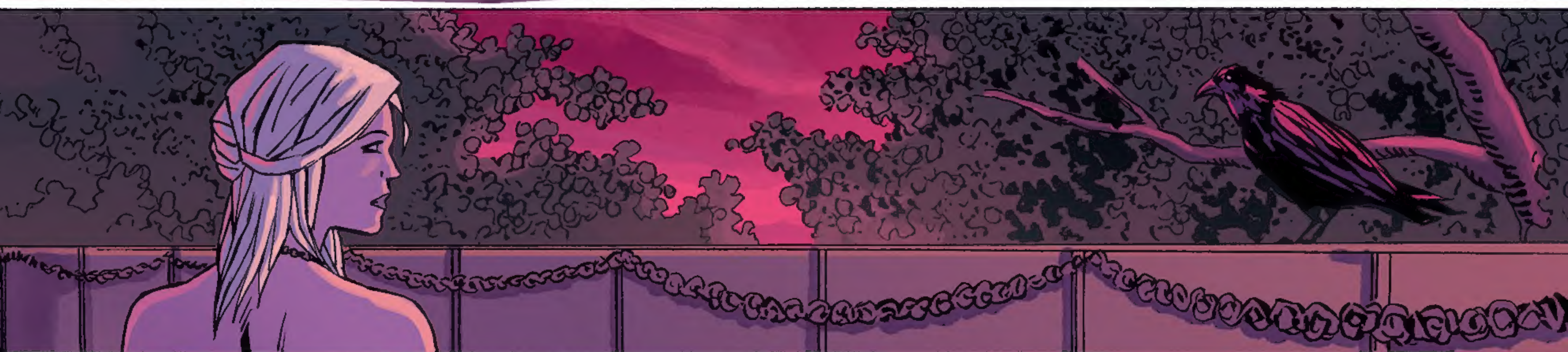
WENCHES GET ANGRY.

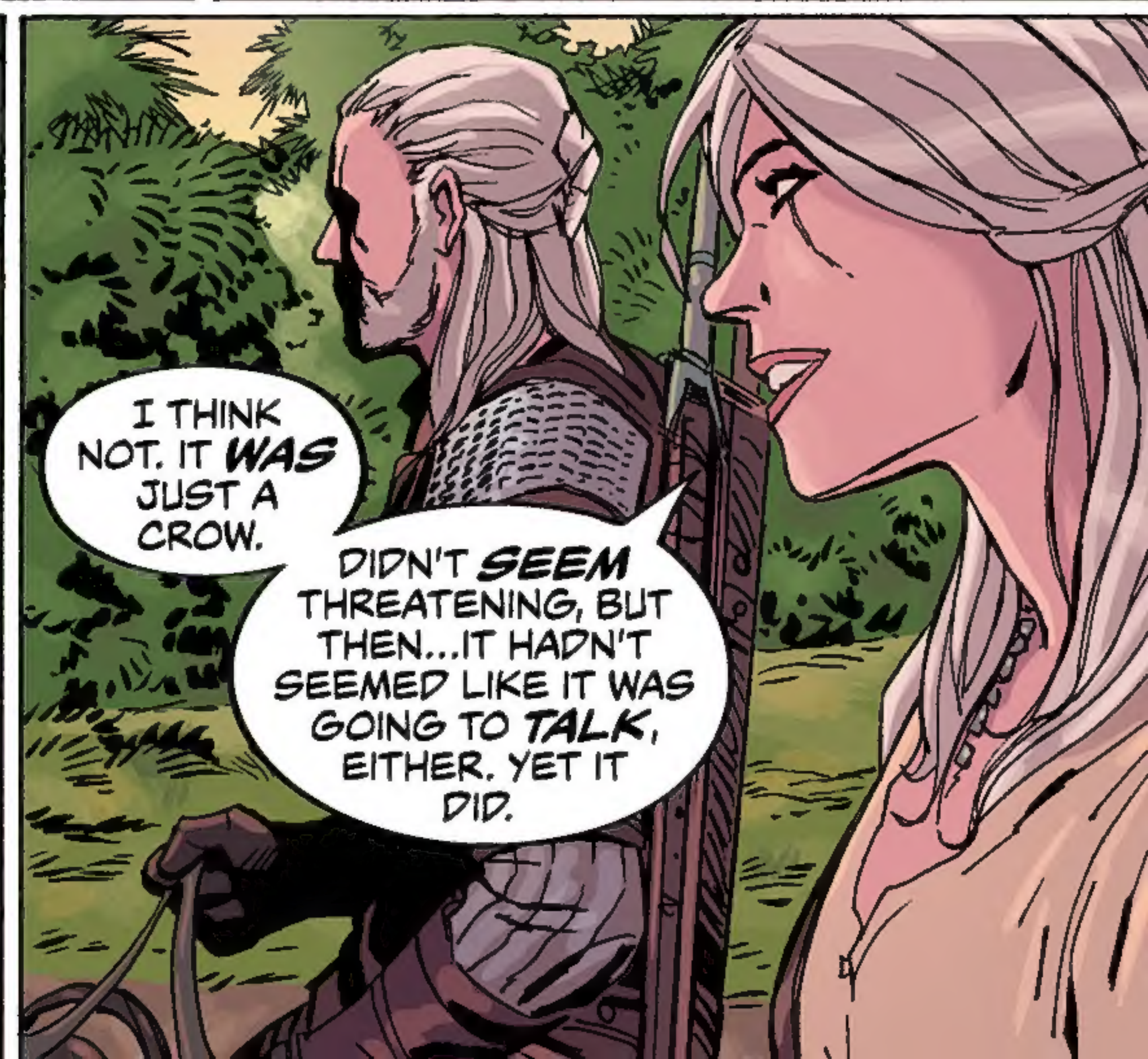
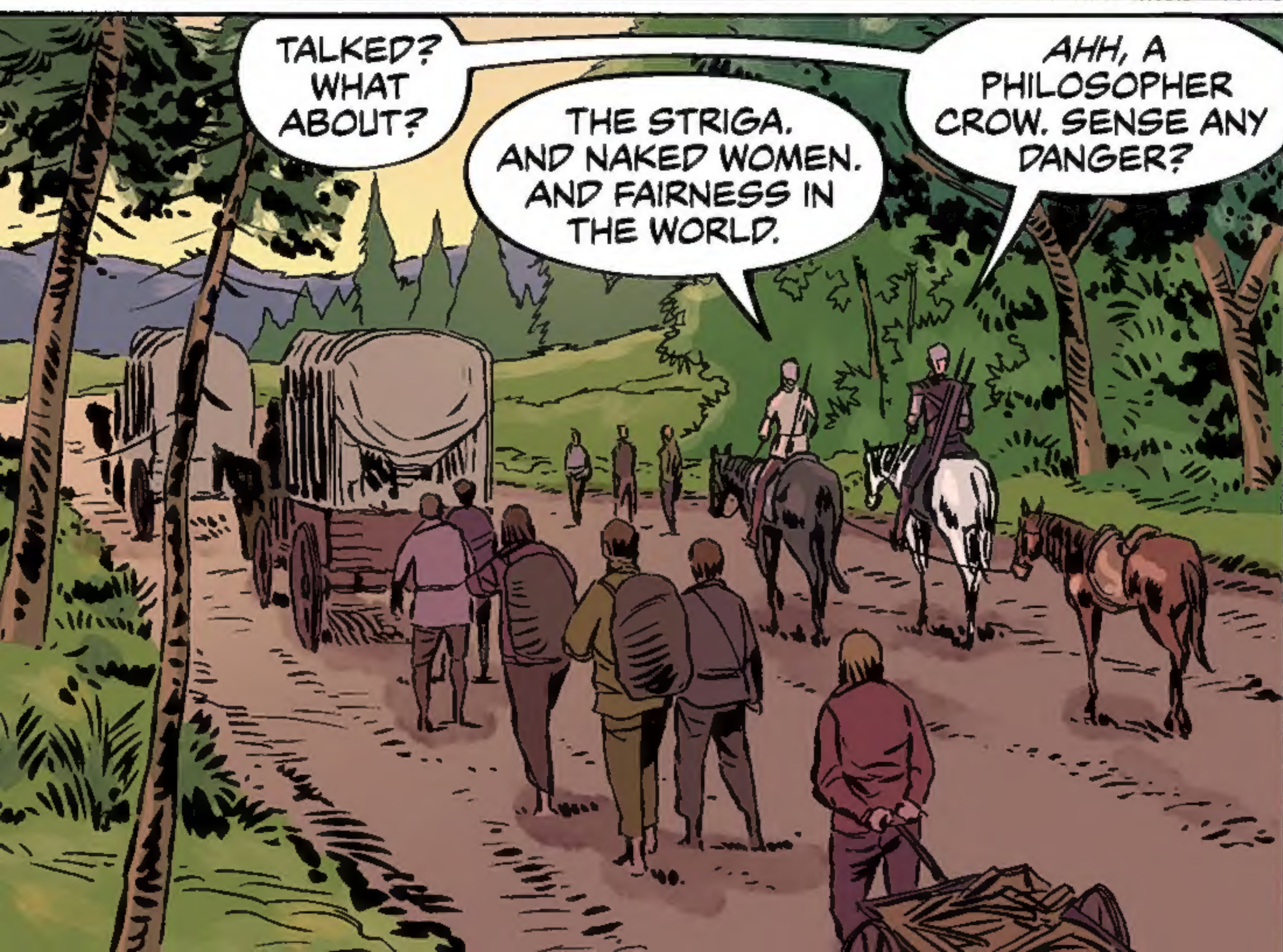
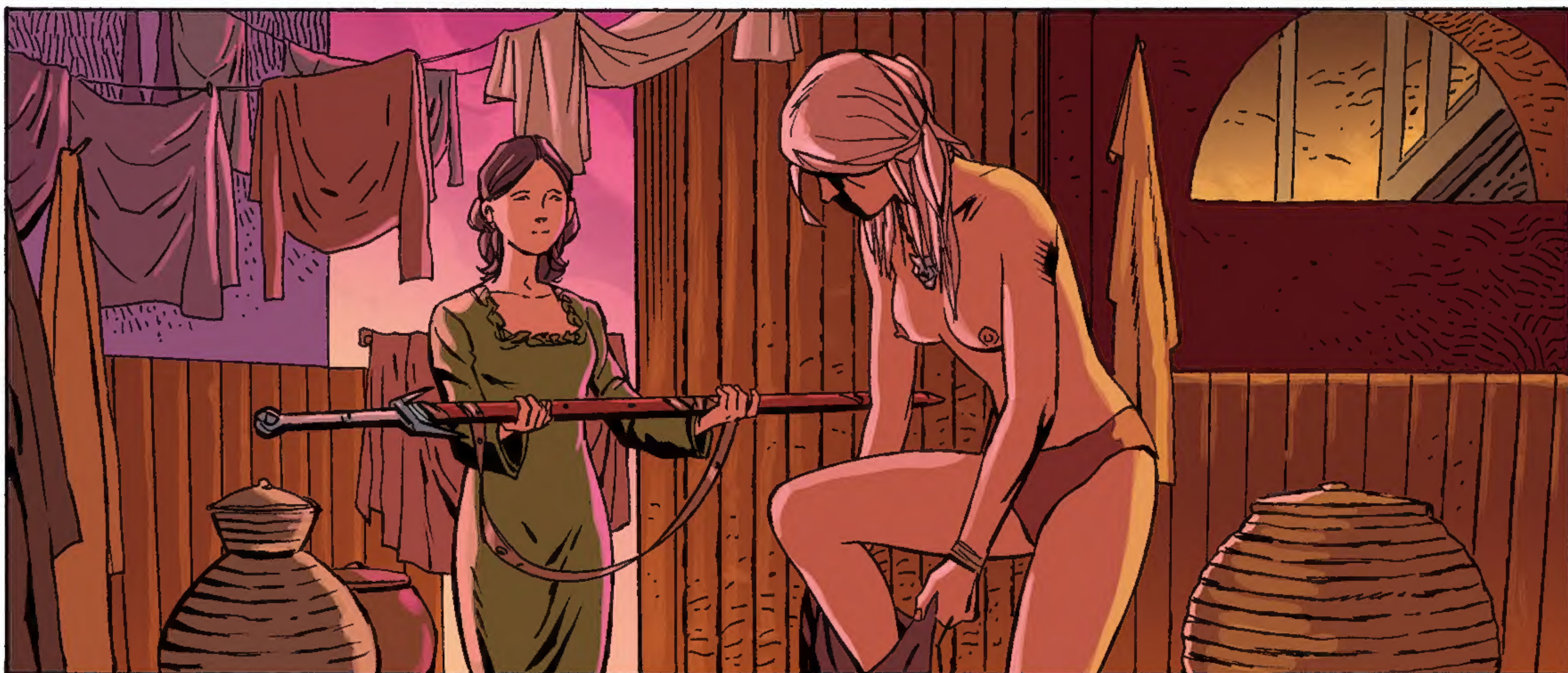
'TAIN'T FAIR.



MY SISTER GETS TO LOOK AND NOBODY STOPS HER. BUT SHE DON'T EVEN CARE ABOUT PRETTY WOMEN. JUST AIN'T FAIR.

NOT FAIR!







A SHORT
TIME LATER...

AHH,
NOVIGRAD. TIME
TO APOLOGIZE TO
OUR NOSES.

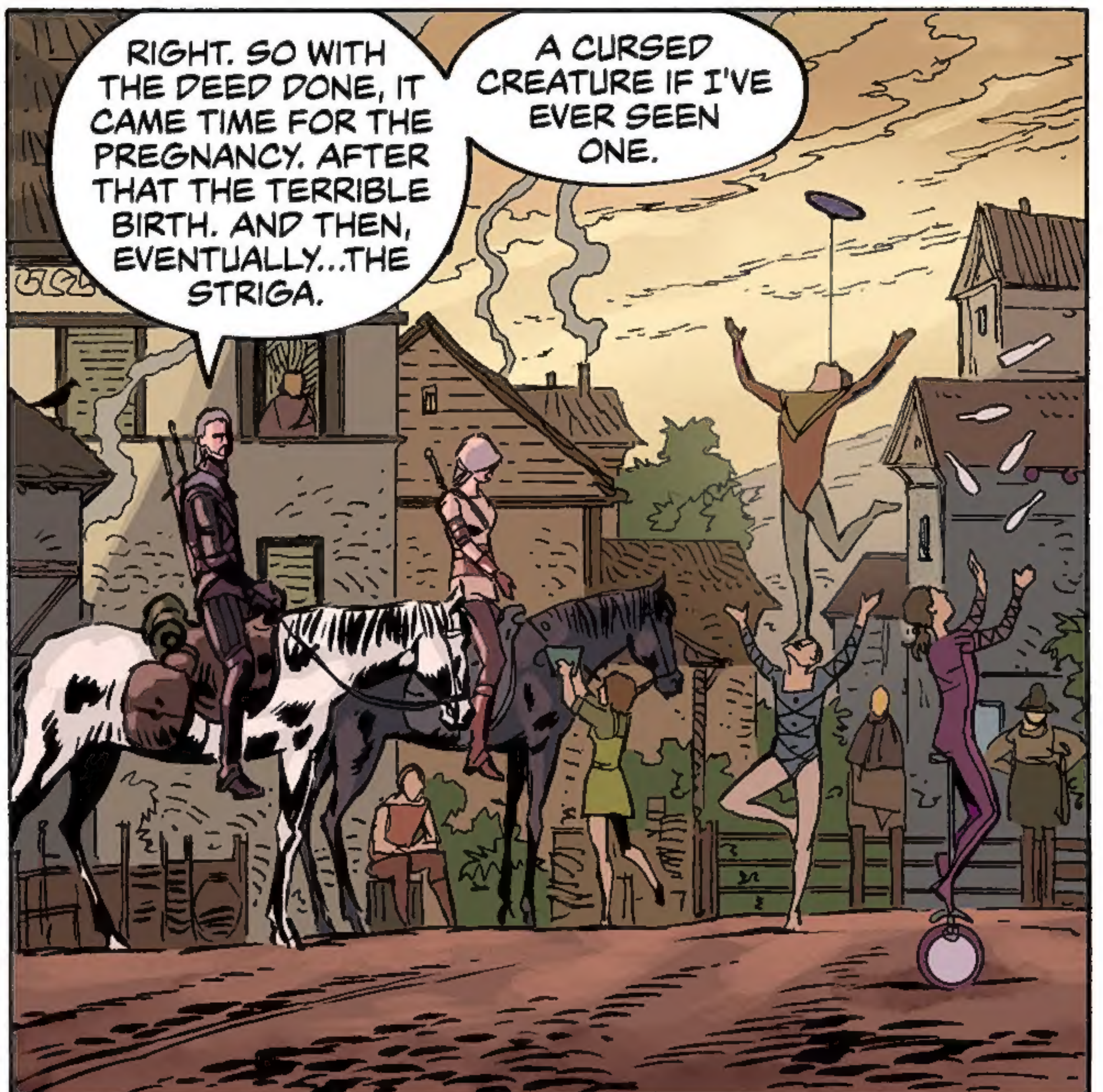
NOT TOO
TERRIBLE WHEN
YOU GET USED
TO IT.

AND
TORTURE'S NOT
TOO BAD AFTER
YOU PASS OUT, BUT IT
DOESN'T MAKE THE
START ANY LESS
PAINFUL.



SO, TELL ME MORE
OF THIS **STRIGA** YOU
FOUGHT. I BELIEVE YOU'D
ARRIVED AT THE POINT
WHERE FOLTEST WAS
ABOUT TO PLOW
HIS SISTER?

YOU CAN
RESTART A BIT
PAST THAT POINT,
IF YOU DON'T
MIND.



RIGHT. SO WITH
THE DEED DONE, IT
CAME TIME FOR THE
PREGNANCY. AFTER
THAT THE TERRIBLE
BIRTH. AND THEN,
EVENTUALLY...THE
STRIGA.

A CURSED
CREATURE IF I'VE
EVER SEEN
ONE.



"OTHER WITCHERS
HAD TRIED TO LIFT
THE CURSE, AS
PER FOLTEST'S
ORDERS.

"YET OTHERS
SET OUT TO
'ACCIDENTALLY'
KILL THE
BEAST.

"THE REWARD WAS
SMALLER, BUT THE
CHANCES OF SUCCESS--
AND SURVIVAL--A LOT
HIGHER."

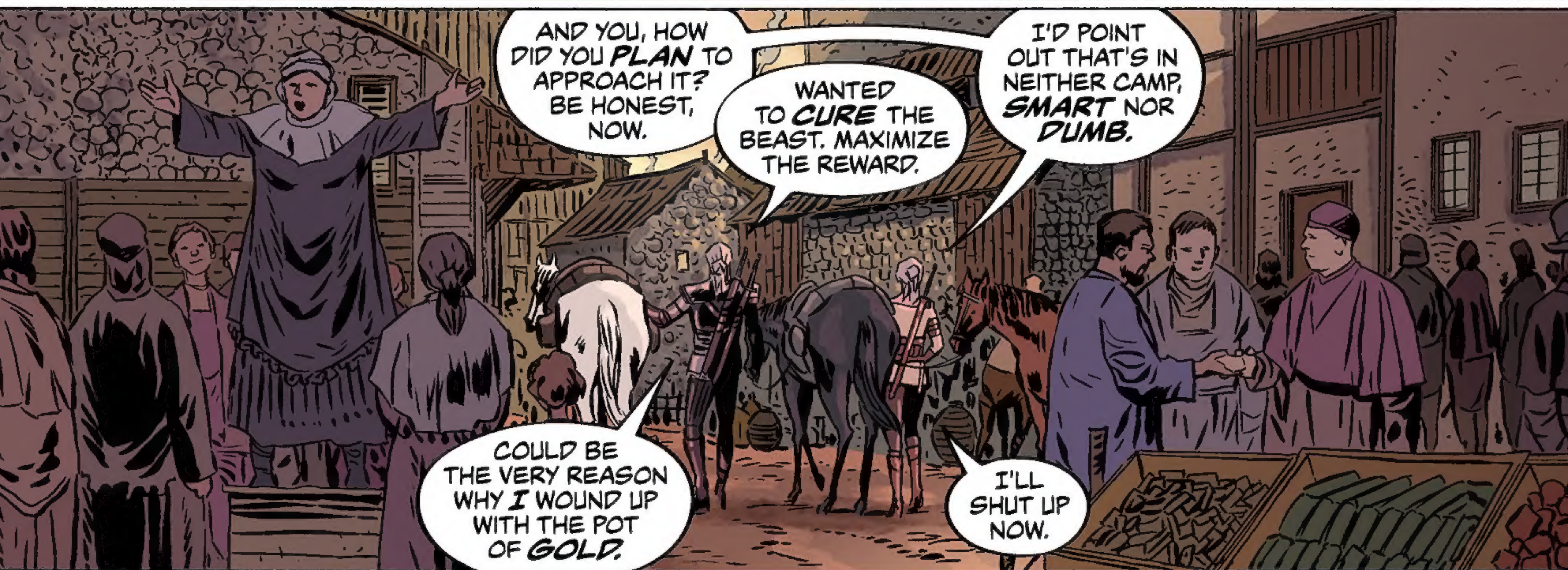


THERE WERE OTHER WITCHERS INVOLVED?

YEAH. A FEW MORE OF US AROUND WALKING THE *PATH* AT THAT TIME. NOT TOO MANY, THOUGH.



"THE STRIGA HAD CHASED OFF THOSE *SMART ENOUGH* TO *RUN* WHEN THEY *SAW* WHAT THEY WERE UP AGAINST, *KILLED* THE ONES DUMB ENOUGH TO *FIGHT*."



AND YOU, HOW DID YOU *PLAN* TO APPROACH IT? BE HONEST, NOW.

WANTED TO *CURE* THE BEAST. MAXIMIZE THE REWARD.

I'D POINT OUT THAT'S IN NEITHER CAMP, *SMART NOR DUMB*.

COULD BE THE VERY REASON WHY I WOUND UP WITH THE POT OF *GOLD*.

I'LL SHUT UP NOW.



YOU? KEEP QUIET?

YOU MEAN I ACTUALLY MANAGED TO *IMPRESS* YOU? WHY DOESN'T MY *ZEUGL* STORY GET THAT KIND OF REACTION?

AND THUS GERALT OF RIVIA PROVES ONCE MORE THAT HE'S A WITCHER, *NOT* A COMEDIAN.



DOES IT SEEM LIKE THERE ARE MORE CROWS THAN USUAL IN NOVIGRAD?

CITY SEEMS TO *EXPAND* EVERY TIME I COME BACK. MORE PEOPLE. MORE CROWS.



I SUPPOSE.

THE CROW AT THE BATHHOUSE, IT **REALLY** TOOK ME FOR A TURN. I ALMOST EXPECT **ALL** OF THEM TO START JABBERING NOW.

MEDALLION'S QUIET.



THEY'RE JUST CROWS. GOT NOTHING TO TELL US.

LOVE MAKING A RACKET, THAT'S ALL.



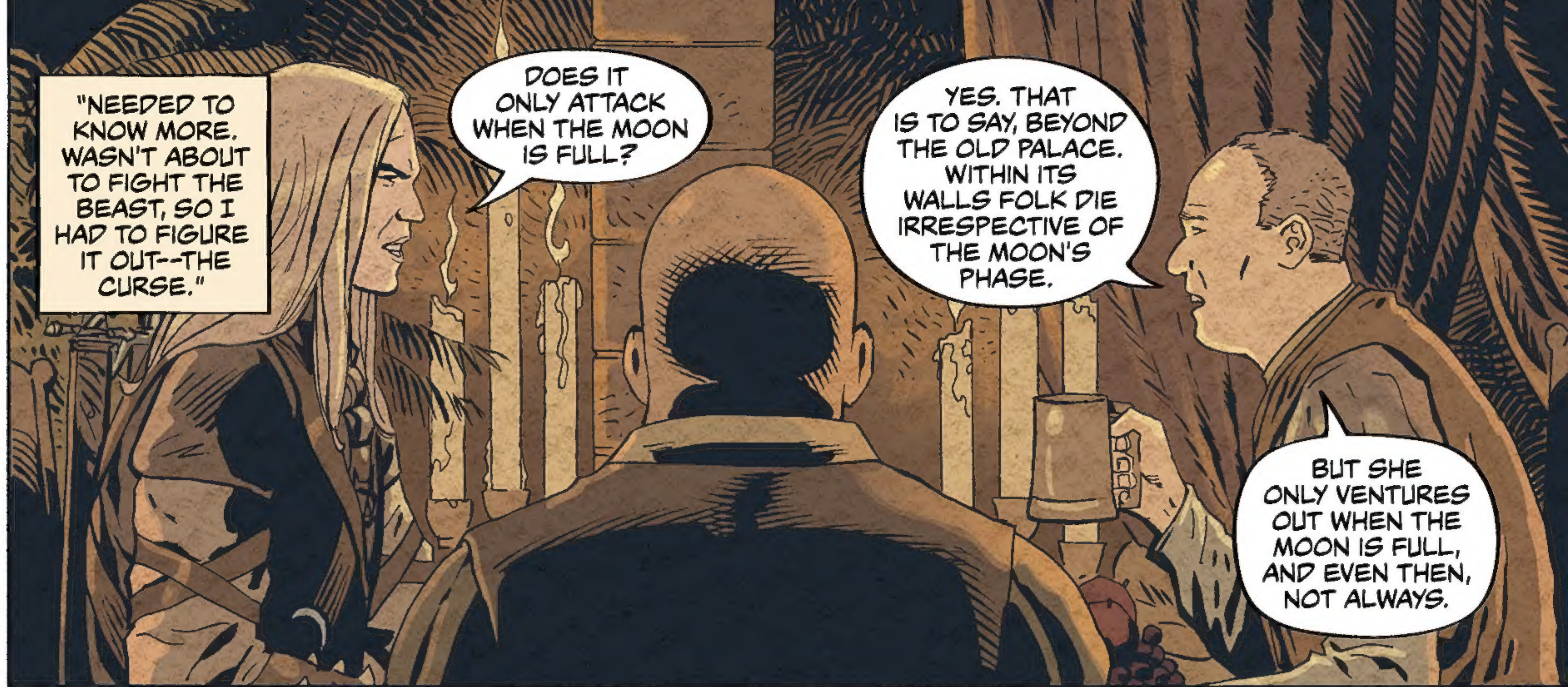
"THEY REMIND ME A BIT OF OSTRIT, FOLTEST'S COURTIER. A JABBERER LIKE FEW OTHERS. HE AND VELERAD TOLD ME BOTH QUEEN ADDA AND HER DAUGHTER HAD BEEN THOUGHT DEAD. DEAD AND BURIED.



"BUT THE PRINCESS HAD RETURNED, AS THE CURSED STRIGA. FOURTEEN YEARS OLD BY THE TIME I CAME AROUND.



"STRIGA HAD FORCED EVERYONE OUT OF THE OLD PALACE. TOO FIERCE TO CURE OR KILL, TOO HUNGRY FOR ANYONE TO ASK HER IF SHE MIGHT POLITELY LEAVE.



"NEEDED TO KNOW MORE. WASN'T ABOUT TO FIGHT THE BEAST, SO I HAD TO FIGURE IT OUT--THE CURSE."

DOES IT ONLY ATTACK WHEN THE MOON IS FULL?

YES. THAT IS TO SAY, BEYOND THE OLD PALACE. WITHIN ITS WALLS FOLK DIE IRRESPECTIVE OF THE MOON'S PHASE.

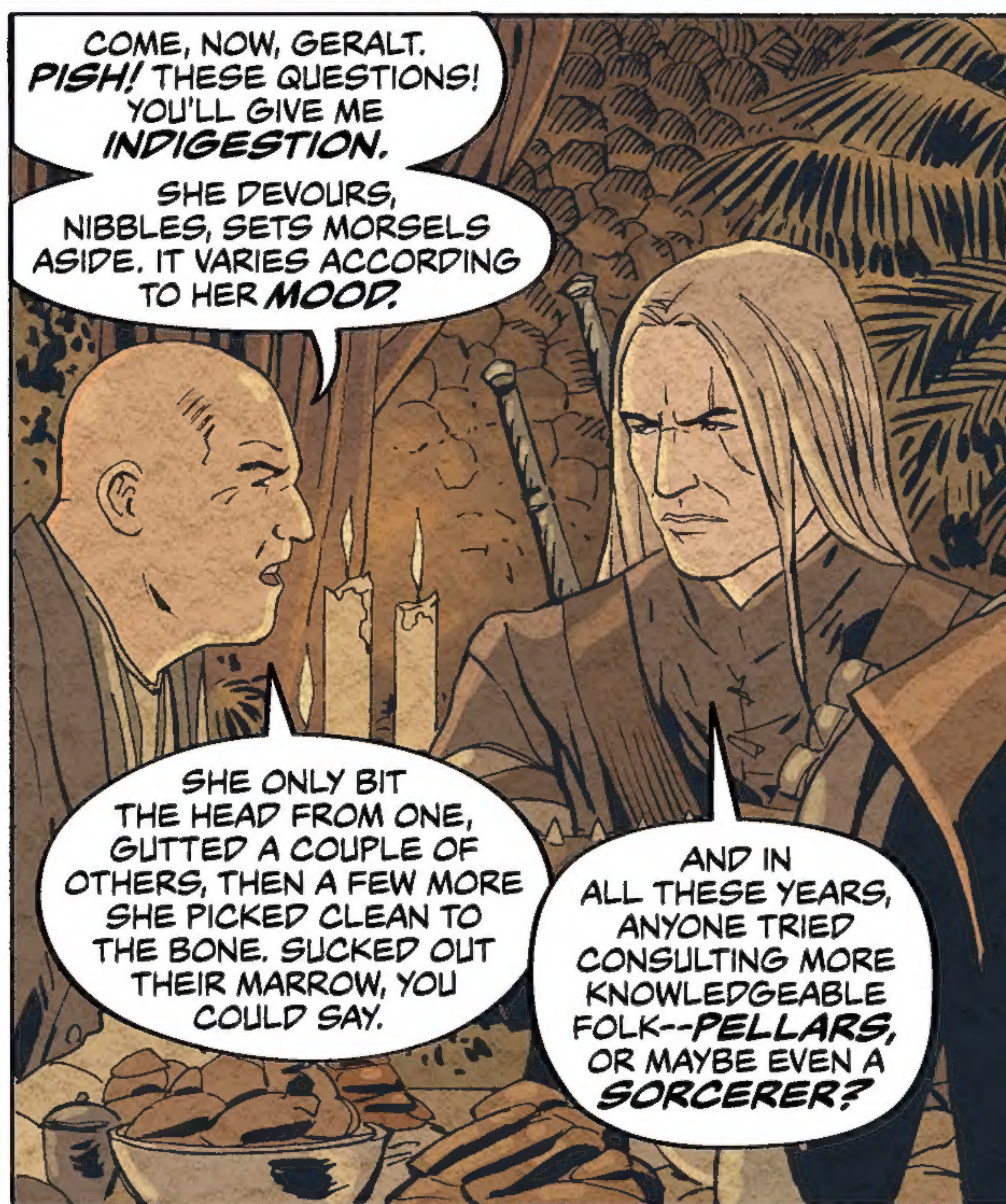
BUT SHE ONLY VENTURES OUT WHEN THE MOON IS FULL, AND EVEN THEN, NOT ALWAYS.



THERE EVER BEEN EVEN ONE ATTACK IN *DAYTIME*?

NO.

SHE ALWAYS *DEVOUR* HER VICTIMS?

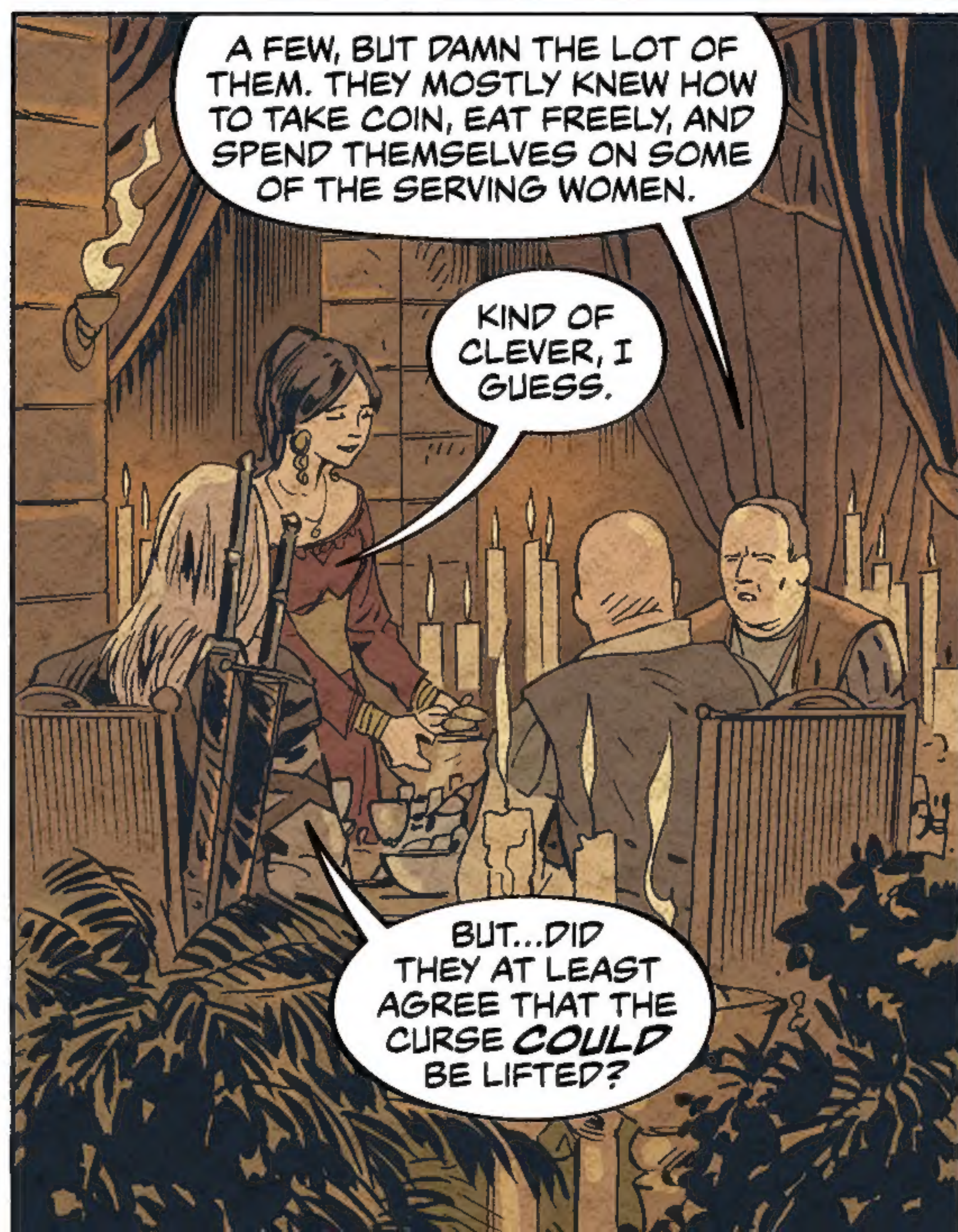


COME, NOW, GERALT. *PISH!* THESE QUESTIONS! YOU'LL GIVE ME *INDIGESTION*.

SHE DEVOURS, NIBBLES, SETS MORSELS ASIDE. IT VARIES ACCORDING TO HER *MOOD*.

SHE ONLY BIT THE HEAD FROM ONE, GUTTED A COUPLE OF OTHERS, THEN A FEW MORE SHE PICKED CLEAN TO THE BONE. SUCKED OUT THEIR MARROW, YOU COULD SAY.

AND IN ALL THESE YEARS, ANYONE TRIED CONSULTING MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE FOLK--*PELLARS*, OR MAYBE EVEN A *SORCERER*?



A FEW, BUT DAMN THE LOT OF THEM. THEY MOSTLY KNEW HOW TO TAKE COIN, EAT FREELY, AND SPEND THEMSELVES ON SOME OF THE SERVING WOMEN.

KIND OF CLEVER, I GUESS.

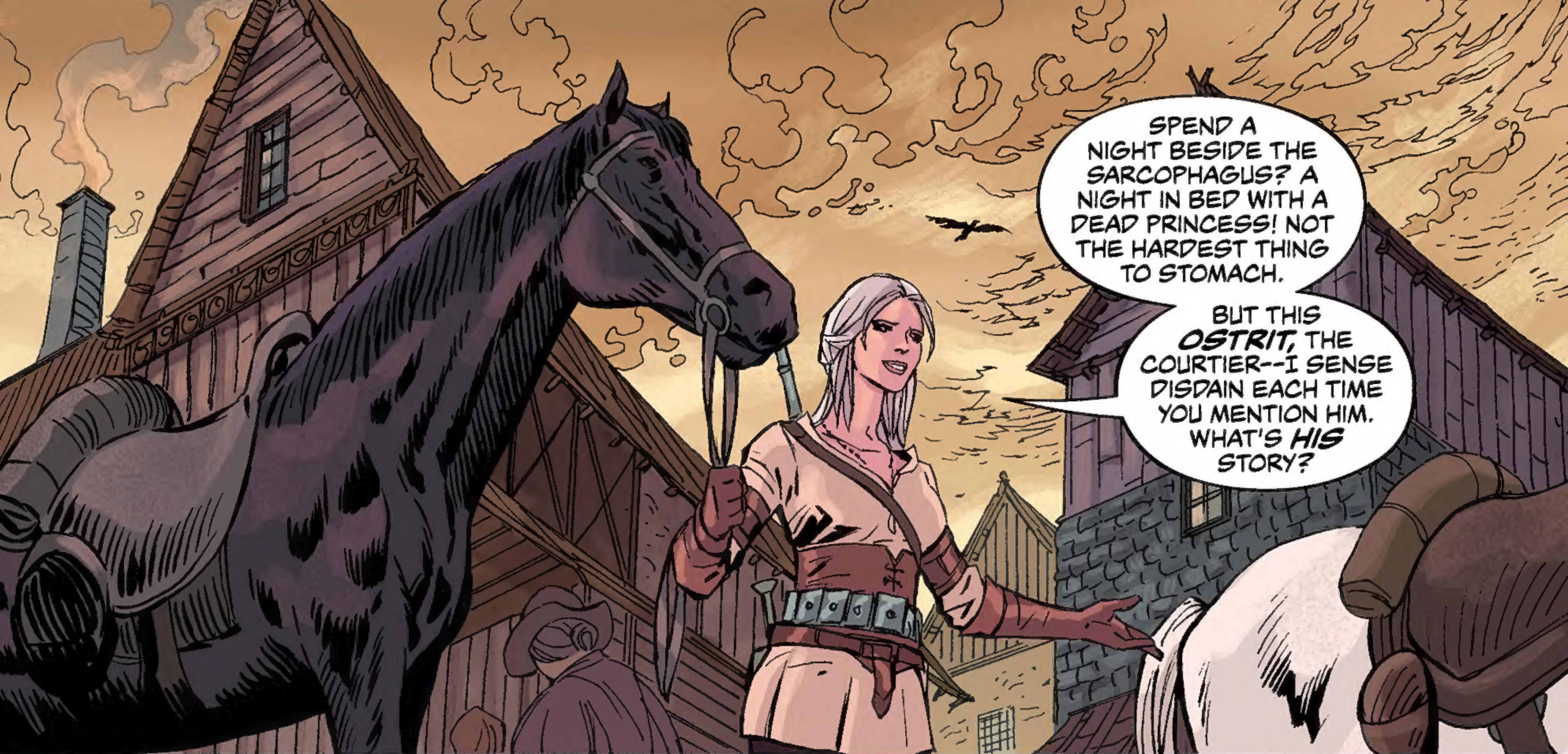
BUT...DID THEY AT LEAST AGREE THAT THE CURSE *COULD* BE LIFTED?



THEY WERE LEAGUES FROM AGREEING ON *ANY* SUBJECT. BUT A FEW EXPRESSED THIS OPINION, YES.

IT WAS TO BE SIMPLE, REQUIRING NO MAGICAL ABILITIES. AS I UNDERSTOOD IT, IT WOULD SUFFICE FOR SOME BRAVE SOUL TO SPEND THE NIGHT...FROM SUNSET TO THE THIRD CROWING OF THE COCK...BY THE BEAST'S SARCOPHAGUS.

HEHEH. SIMPLE INDEED.



SPEND A NIGHT BESIDE THE SARCOPHAGUS? A NIGHT IN BED WITH A DEAD PRINCESS! NOT THE HARDEST THING TO STOMACH.

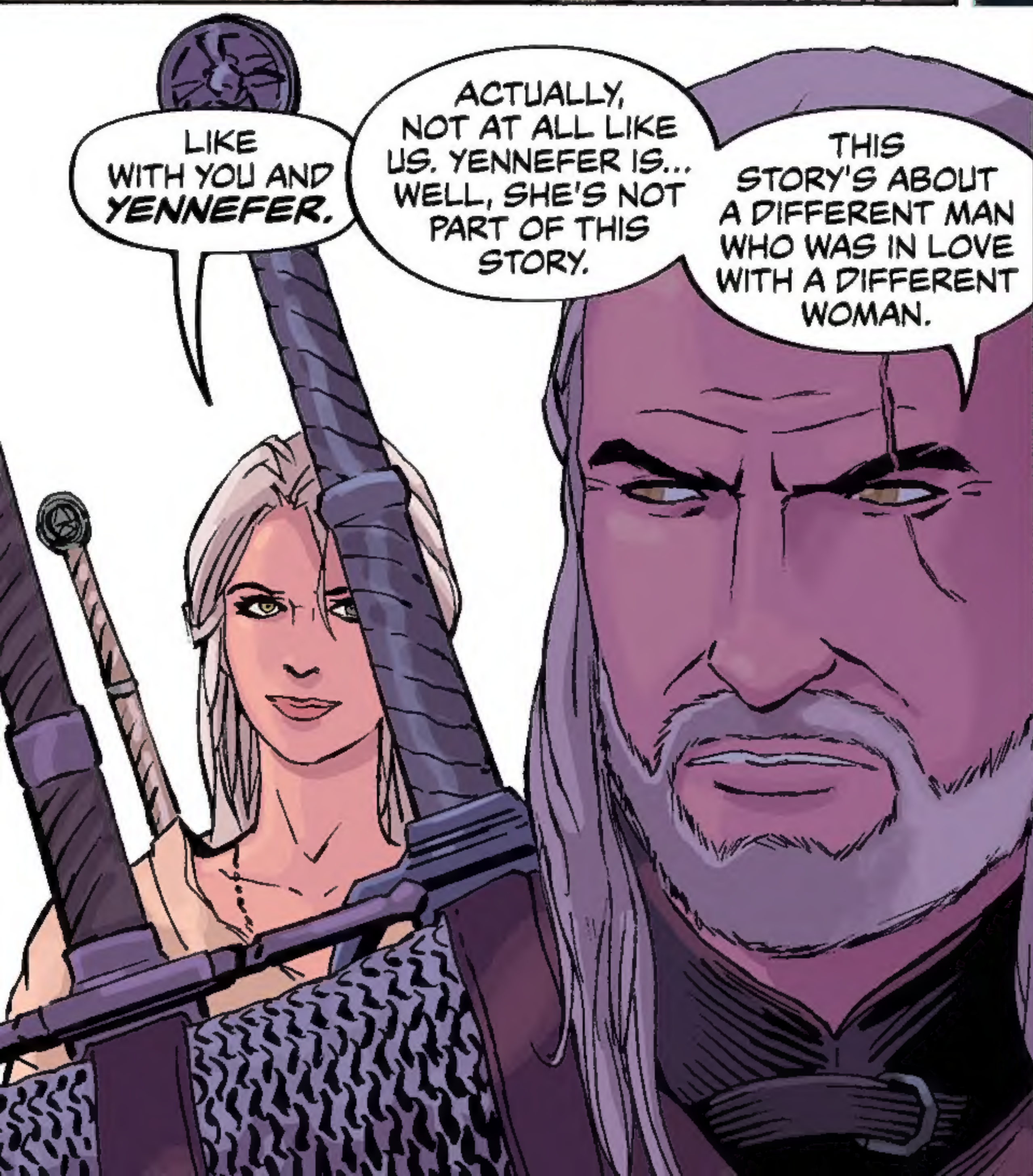
BUT THIS **OSTRIT**, THE COURTIER--I SENSE DISDAIN EACH TIME YOU MENTION HIM. WHAT'S **HIS** STORY?



HIS STORY'S THE WHOLE STORY.



"THE MAN HAD BEEN IN LOVE WITH ADDA. ONE OF THOSE FIERCE, **GRINDING** LOVES THAT EAT YOU UP INSIDE."



LIKE WITH YOU AND **YENNEFER**.

ACTUALLY, NOT AT ALL LIKE US. **YENNEFER** IS... WELL, SHE'S NOT PART OF THIS STORY.

THIS STORY'S ABOUT A DIFFERENT MAN WHO WAS IN LOVE WITH A DIFFERENT WOMAN.



"AND THAT MAN, CHUBBY LITTLE **OSTRIT**, HAD TO STAND ASIDE AND WATCH AS THE WOMAN HE LOVED WAS SULLIED BY THE KING, HER BROTHER, WHO EVEN STUCK HER WITH CHILD. CAN'T SAY I ENVY **OSTRIT**."

"MUST'VE BEEN DEVASTATED. THOUGH I ALSO CAN'T CONDONE WHAT HE DID NEXT."



"ON THE NIGHT OF THE NEXT FULL MOON, IN THE OLD CASTLE, I WAS DONE WITH MY PREPARATIONS...HAD MY SILVER SWORD AT THE READY, HAD ALREADY KNOCKED BACK VERATRUM, STRAMONIUM, HAWTHORN, SPURGE, AND BANEWORT...AND OSTRIT SHOWED UP WITH AN OFFER."

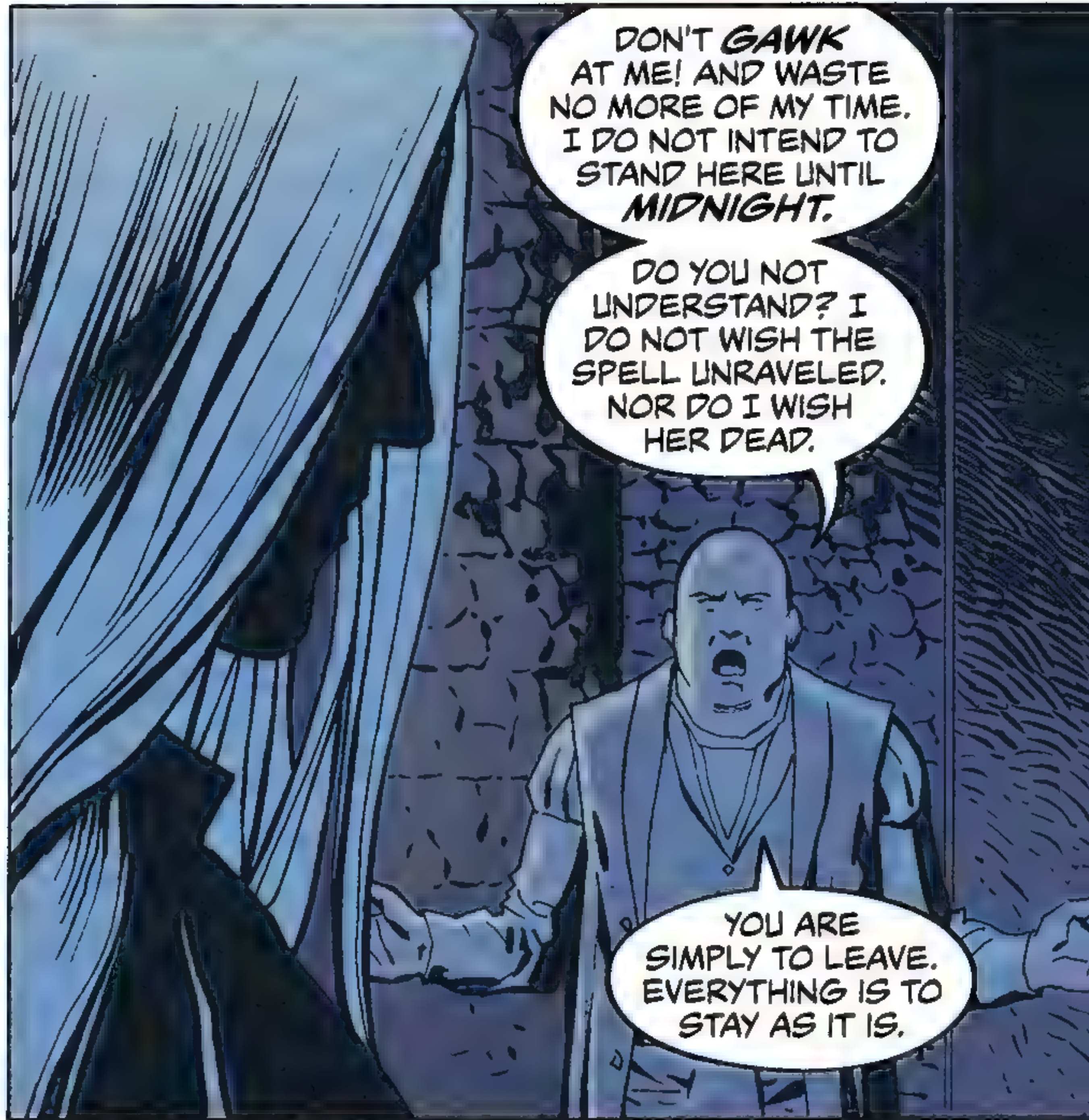
BE NOT AFRAID. I BRING YOU RELIEF.



DO YOU HEAR ME, YOU RIVIAN CHARLATAN? YOU ARE SAVED, AND RICH.

ONE THOUSAND ORENS. TAKE IT, GET ON YOUR HORSE, AND RIDE AWAY!

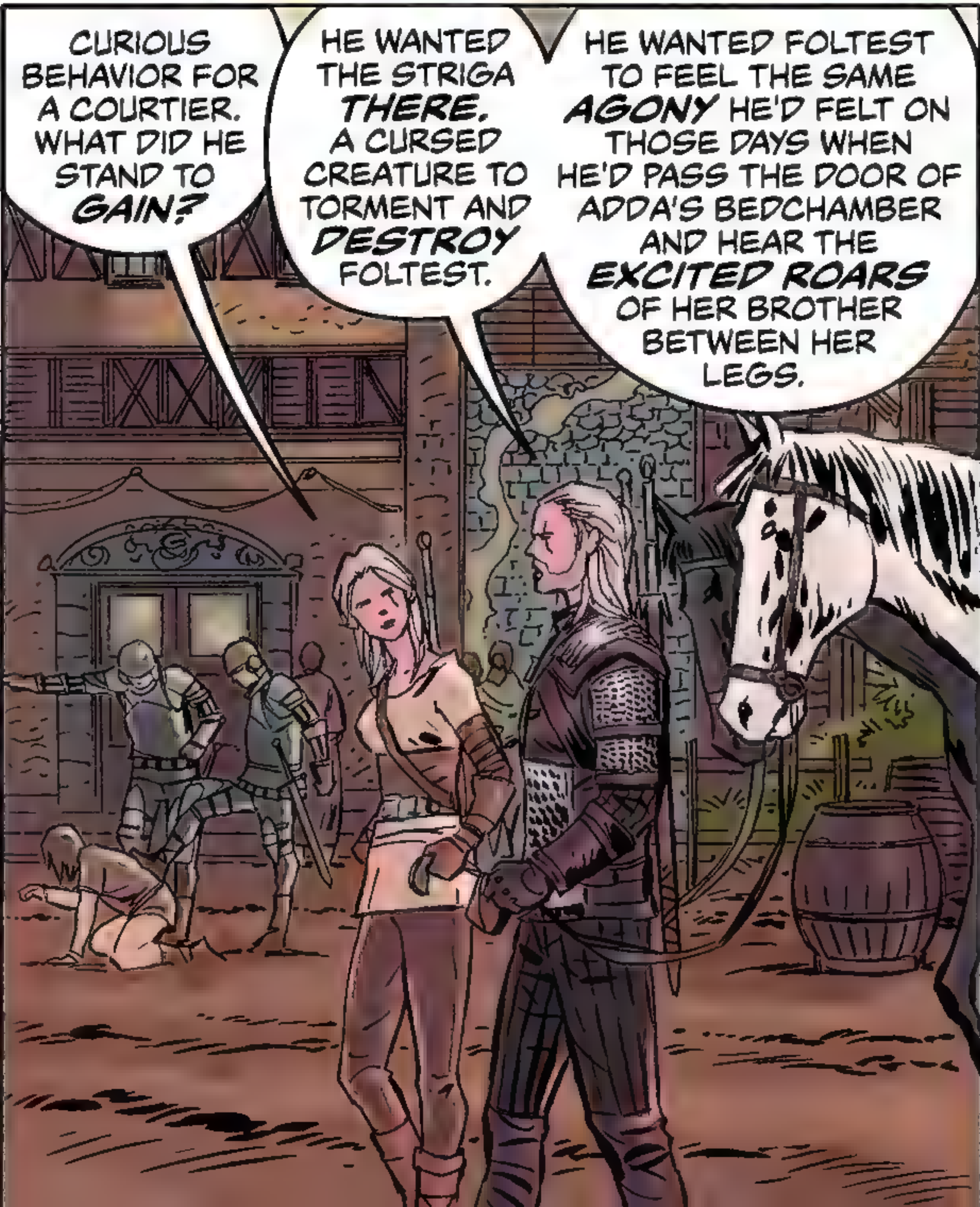
CHUNK



DON'T **GAWK** AT ME! AND WASTE NO MORE OF MY TIME. I DO NOT INTEND TO STAND HERE UNTIL **MIDNIGHT**.

DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND? I DO NOT WISH THE SPELL UNRAVELED. NOR DO I WISH HER DEAD.

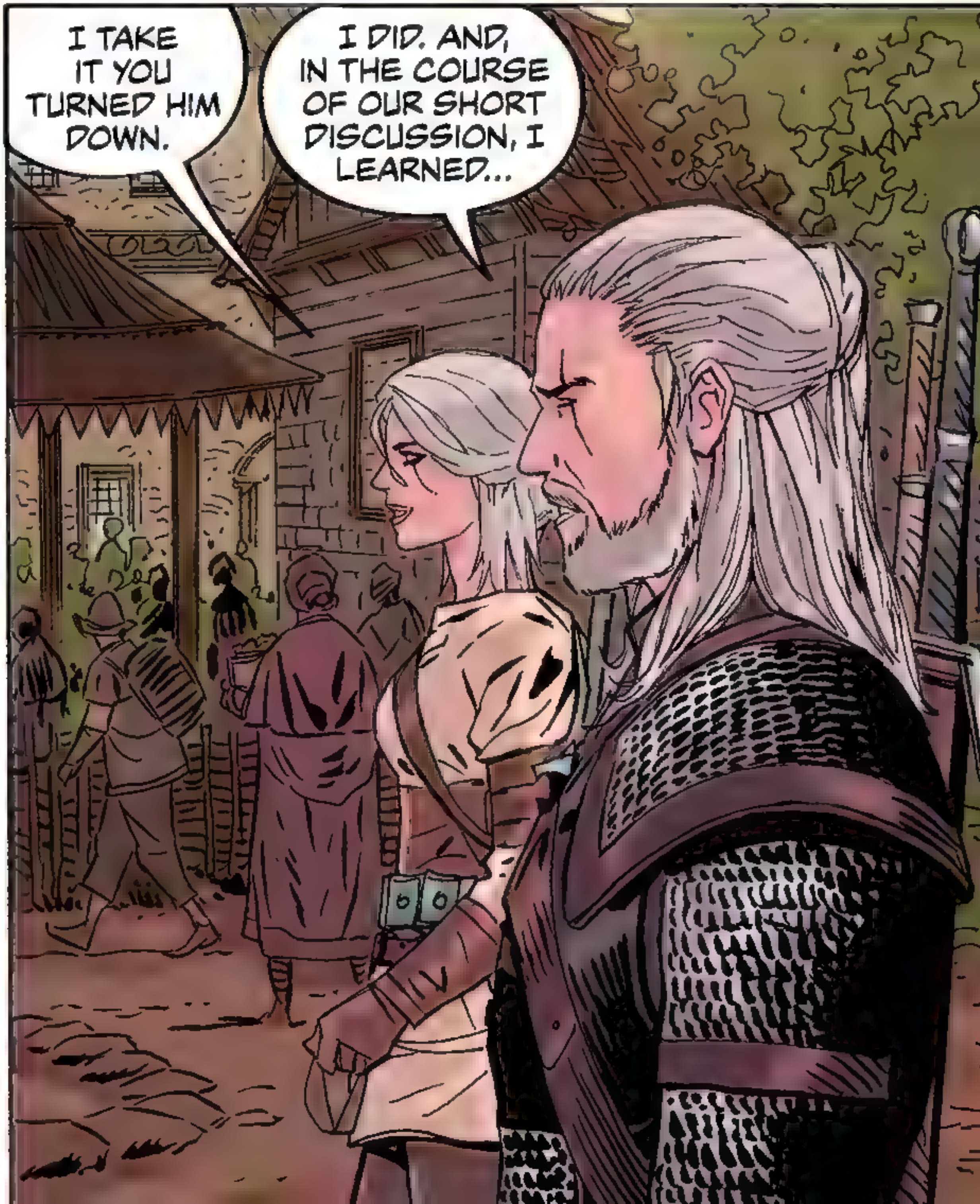
YOU ARE SIMPLY TO LEAVE. EVERYTHING IS TO STAY AS IT IS.



CURIOUS BEHAVIOR FOR A COURTIER. WHAT DID HE STAND TO **GAIN**?

HE WANTED THE STRIGA **THERE**. A CURSED CREATURE TO TORMENT AND **DESTROY** FOLTEST.

HE WANTED FOLTEST TO FEEL THE SAME **AGONY** HE'D FELT ON THOSE DAYS WHEN HE'D PASS THE DOOR OF ADDA'S BEDCHAMBER AND HEAR THE **EXCITED ROARS** OF HER BROTHER BETWEEN HER LEGS.



I TAKE IT YOU TURNED HIM DOWN.

I DID. AND, IN THE COURSE OF OUR SHORT DISCUSSION, I LEARNED...



"...OSTRIT HAD CAST THE CURSE. HE'D GIVEN RISE TO THE STRIGA. HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIVES SHE'D CLAIMED."

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. BUT IT WASN'T LIKE THAT. BELIEVE ME, I CAST NO SPELLS. I KNOW NO MAGIC.

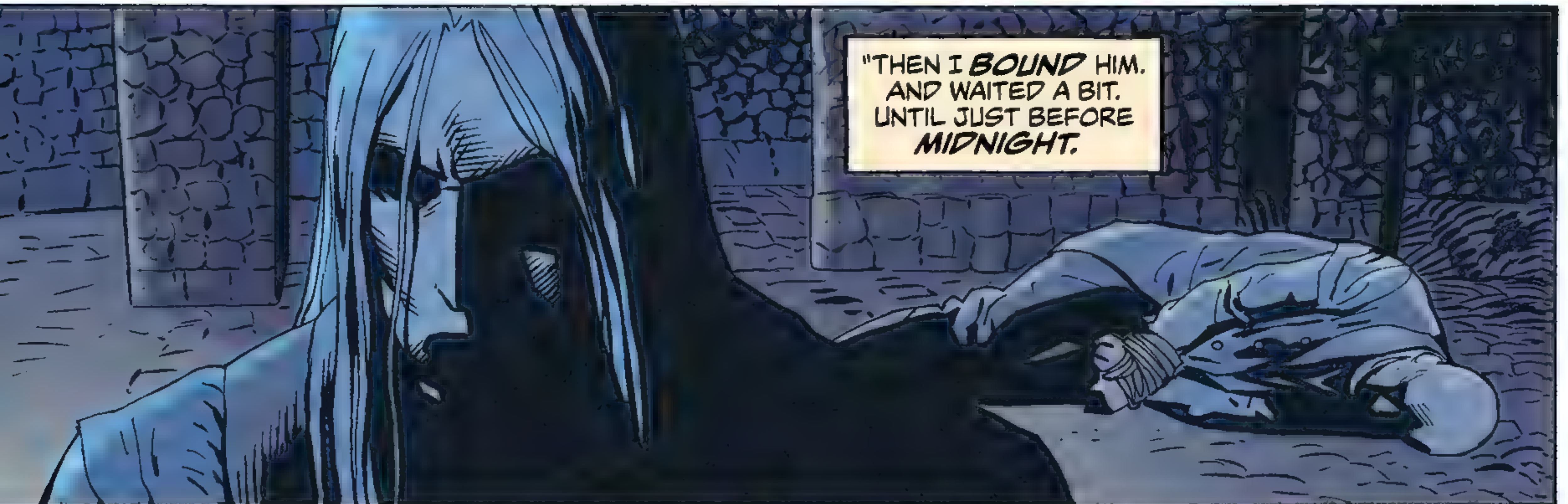
ONLY ONCE IN ANGER DID I SAY...DID I SAY... IT WAS ONLY THE ONCE, WITCHER! GERALT? ARE YOU LISTENING?



"I ALSO LEARNED THAT HE'D INTENDED TO TAKE MY *LIFE* IF I REFUSED HIS COIN."



"GAVE HIM MY ANSWER TO THAT, AS WELL."



"THEN I *BOUND* HIM. AND WAITED A BIT. UNTIL JUST BEFORE *MIDNIGHT*."



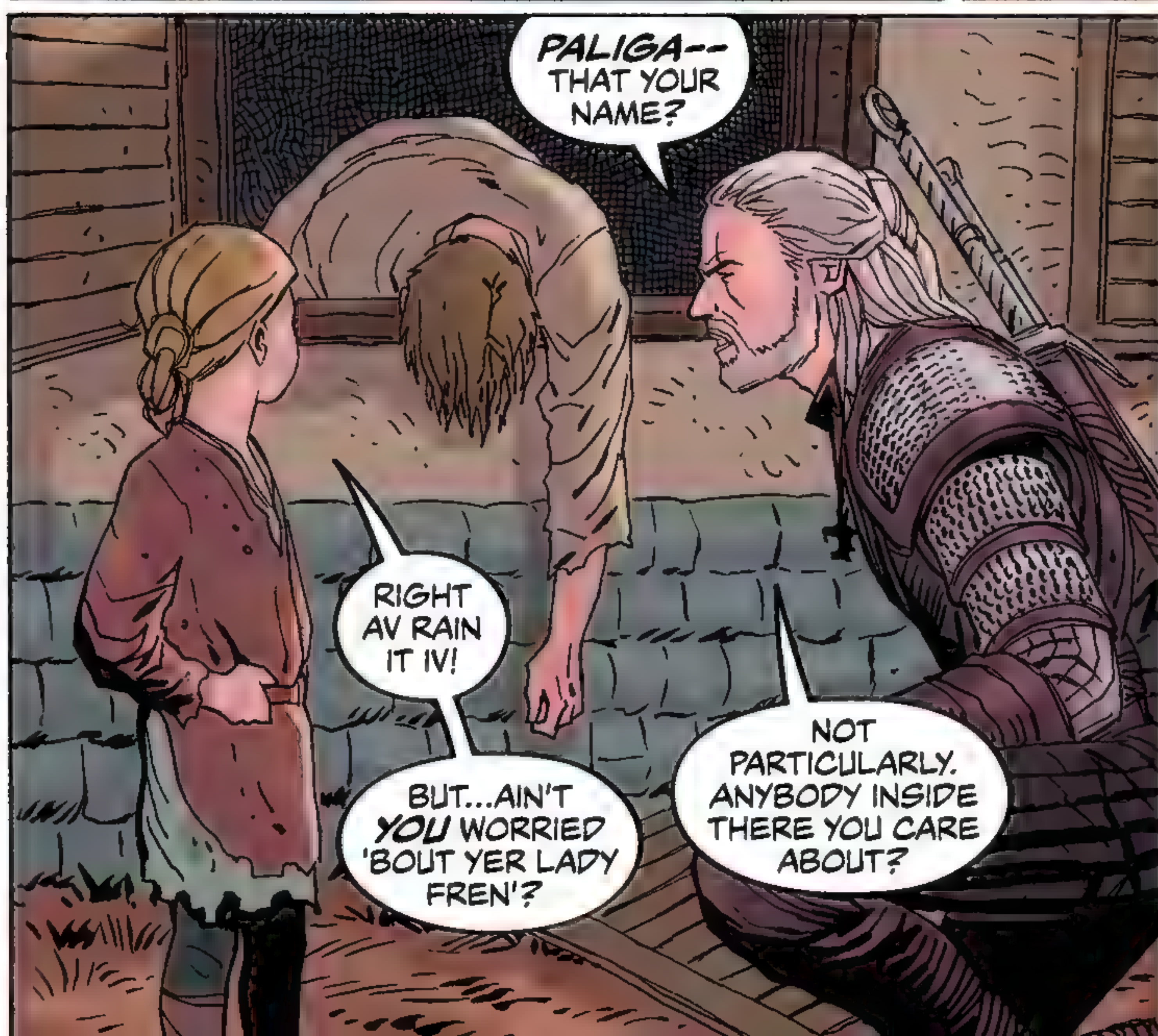
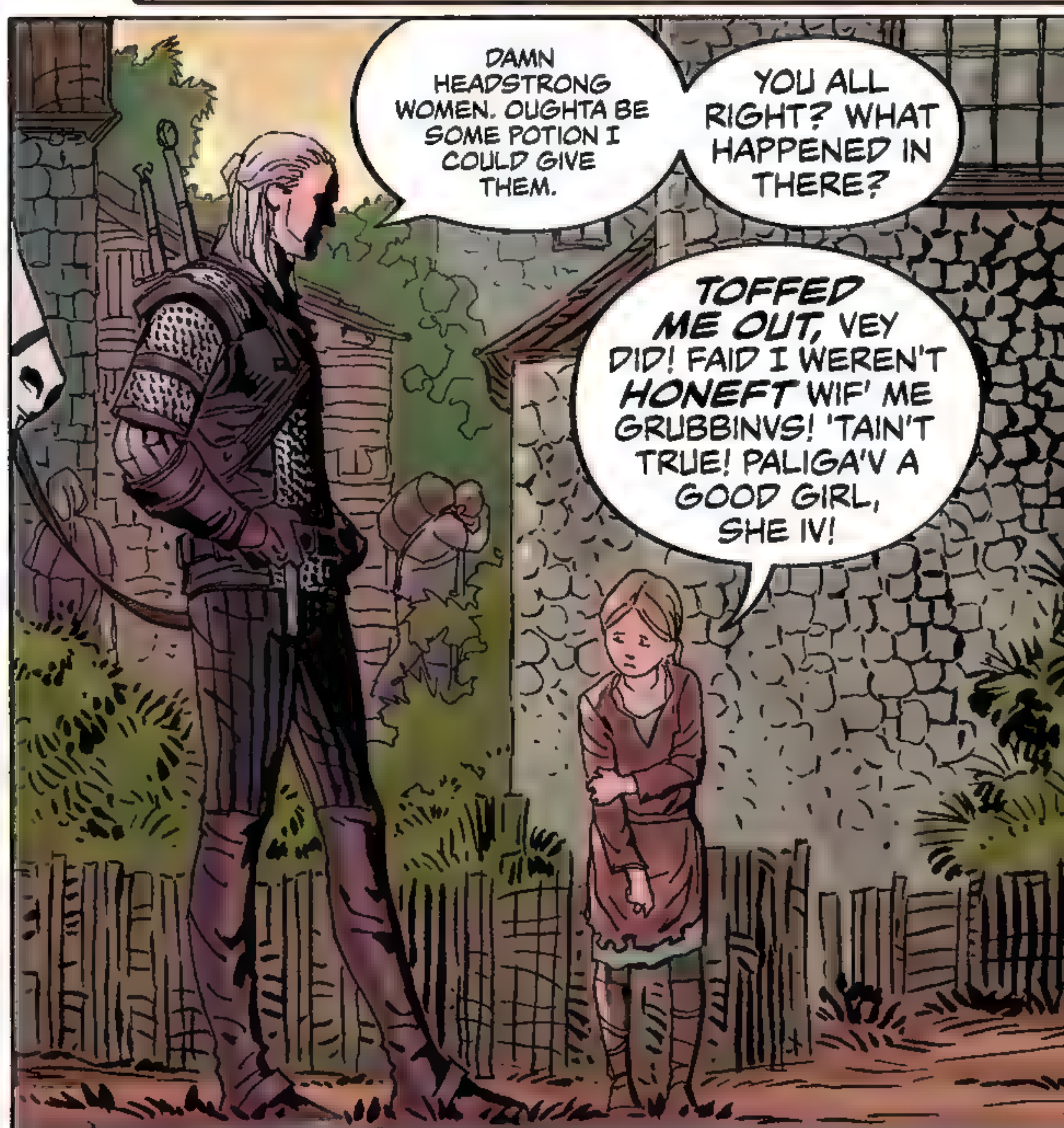
"TILL I HEARD, DEEP DOWN BELOW, THE SARCOPHAGUS LID MOVE. SLIDE ASIDE. THE HOLLOW SOUND OF STONE. THE CREATURE'S GRUNTS. TEETH GNASHING."

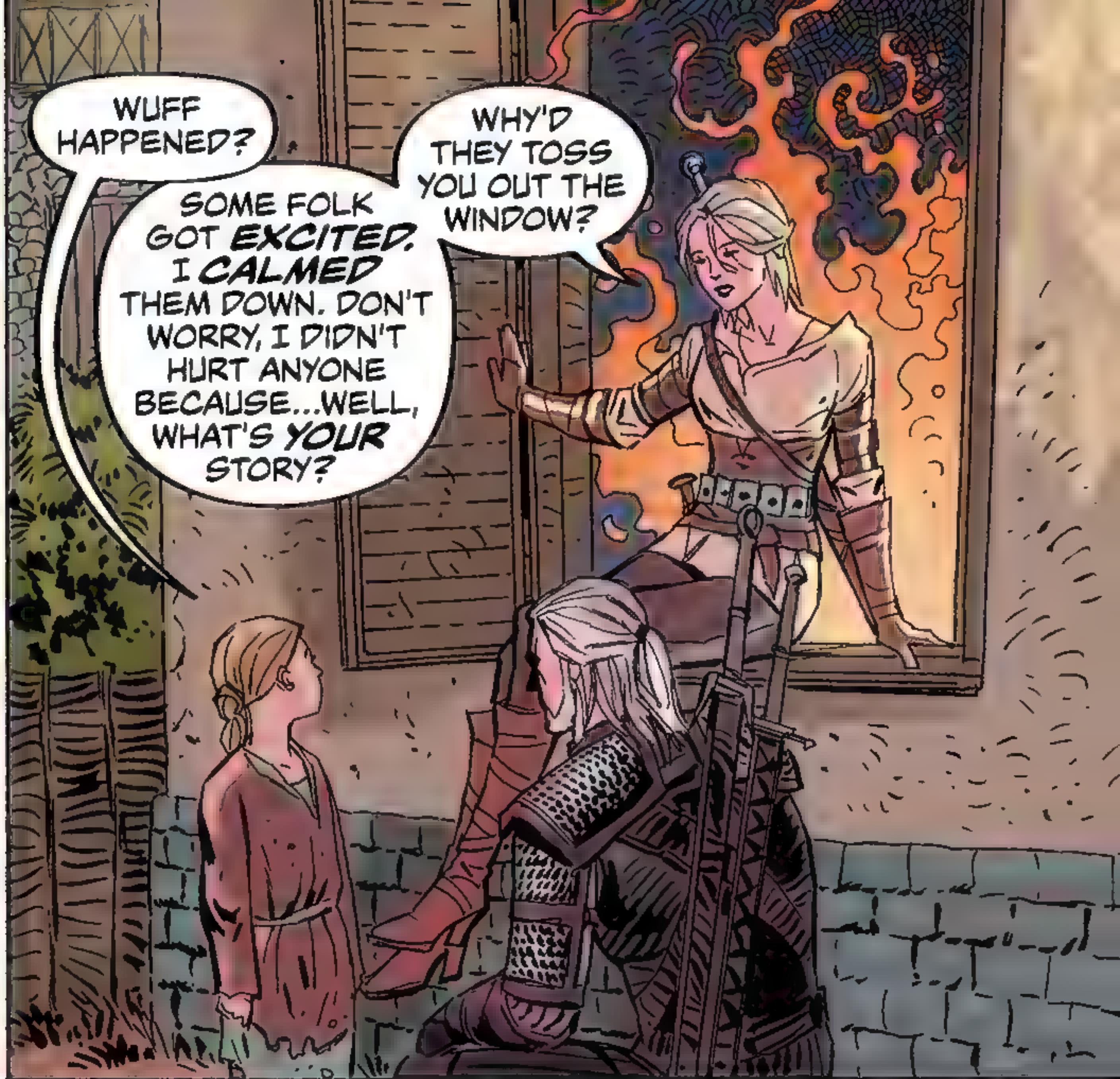
"THEN I SET OSTRIT FREE. FREE TO SEE THE HORROR WE COULD BOTH NOW HEAR. FREE TO SEE IF HE... A COURTIER...COULD OUTRUN THE CREATURE HE'D CREATED."



FMPP

NO! GERALT! I BEG YOU!

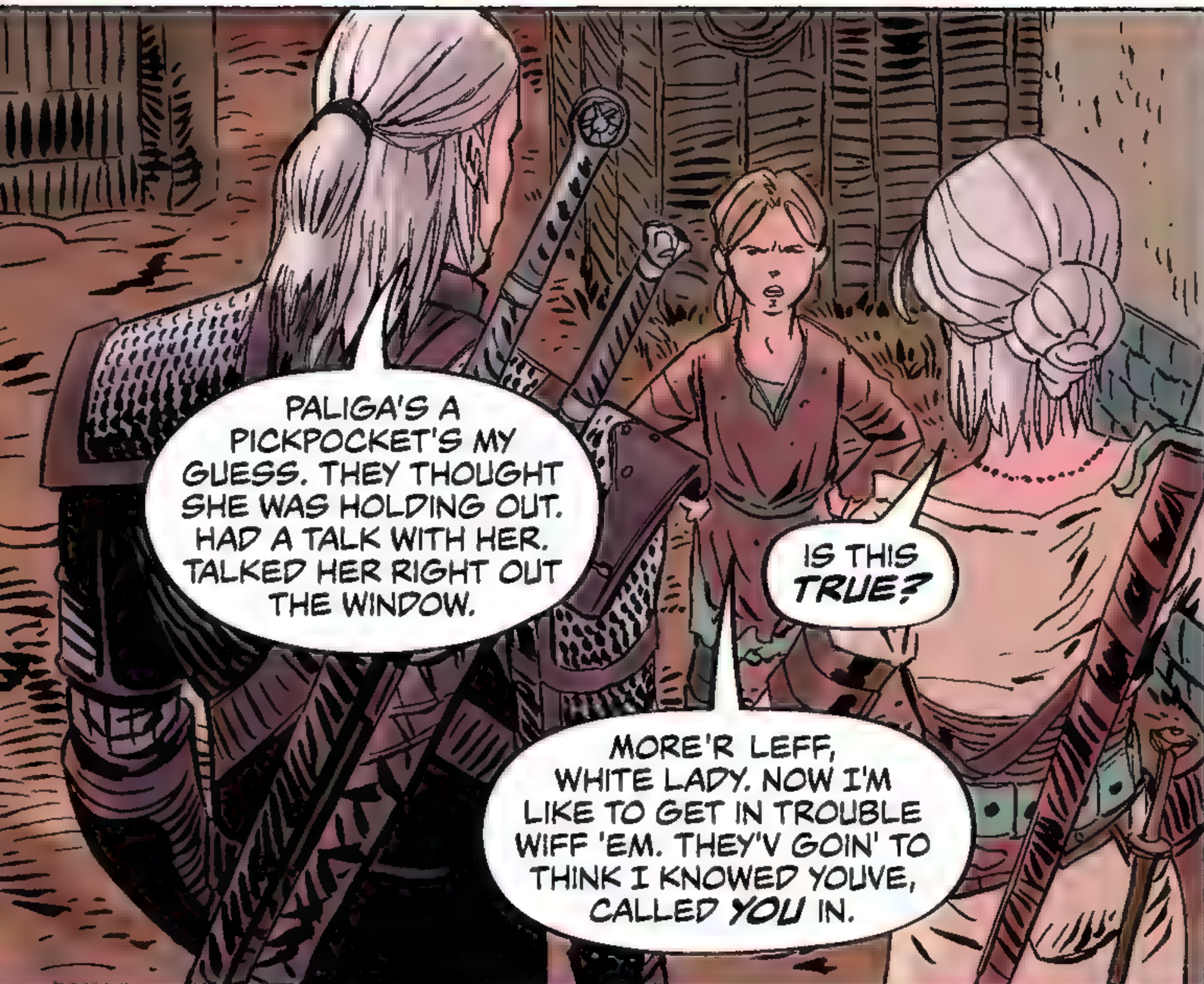




WUFF
HAPPENED?

SOME FOLK
GOT **EXCITED**.
I **CALMED**
THEM DOWN. DON'T
WORRY, I DIDN'T
HURT ANYONE
BECAUSE...WELL,
WHAT'S **YOUR**
STORY?

WHY'D
THEY TOSS
YOU OUT THE
WINDOW?



PALIGA'S A
PICKPOCKET'S MY
GUESS. THEY THOUGHT
SHE WAS HOLDING OUT.
HAD A TALK WITH HER.
TALKED HER RIGHT OUT
THE WINDOW.

IS THIS
TRUE?

MORE'R LEFF,
WHITE LADY. NOW I'M
LIKE TO GET IN TROUBLE
WIFF 'EM. THEY'V GOIN' TO
THINK I KNEWED YOU'VE,
CALLED **YOU** IN.



YOU SHOULD RUN
OFF. START A
NEW LIFE.

NO GOOD.
WHERE'D I GO
TO? I'LL JUFT HAF
TO MAKE 'EM FINK YOU
TREATED LI'L **PALIGA**
ROUGH, TOO. NUFFIN'
TO IT. I'VE DONE
IT AFORE.

FTAND
AFIDE?
MAKE FOME
ROOM?



OOF!



NOVIGRAD--IT
NEVER CEASES
TO SURPRISE
ME.

REALLY?
USUALLY SHOWS
ME **EXACTLY**
WHAT I
EXPECT.

THIRTY MINUTES
LATER. PRIESTESS
MAERLINA'S BATHS.

NOW THAT
YOU'RE HERE,
WITCHERS, LEND
ME YER EARS.
I'VE *MUCH*
TO TELL.

IT'S ONLY FAIR
YE KNOW WHO YE DEAL
WITH. YE WITCHERS MAKE
IT A POINT TO BE ABLE TO
JUDGE WHO'S FRIEND,
WHO'S FOE.

AND THE
BETTER TO KNOW
WHERE TO *STAB* IF
THE NEED COMES.
AM I RIGHT?

THAT'S
ONE WAY OF
PUTTING
IT.

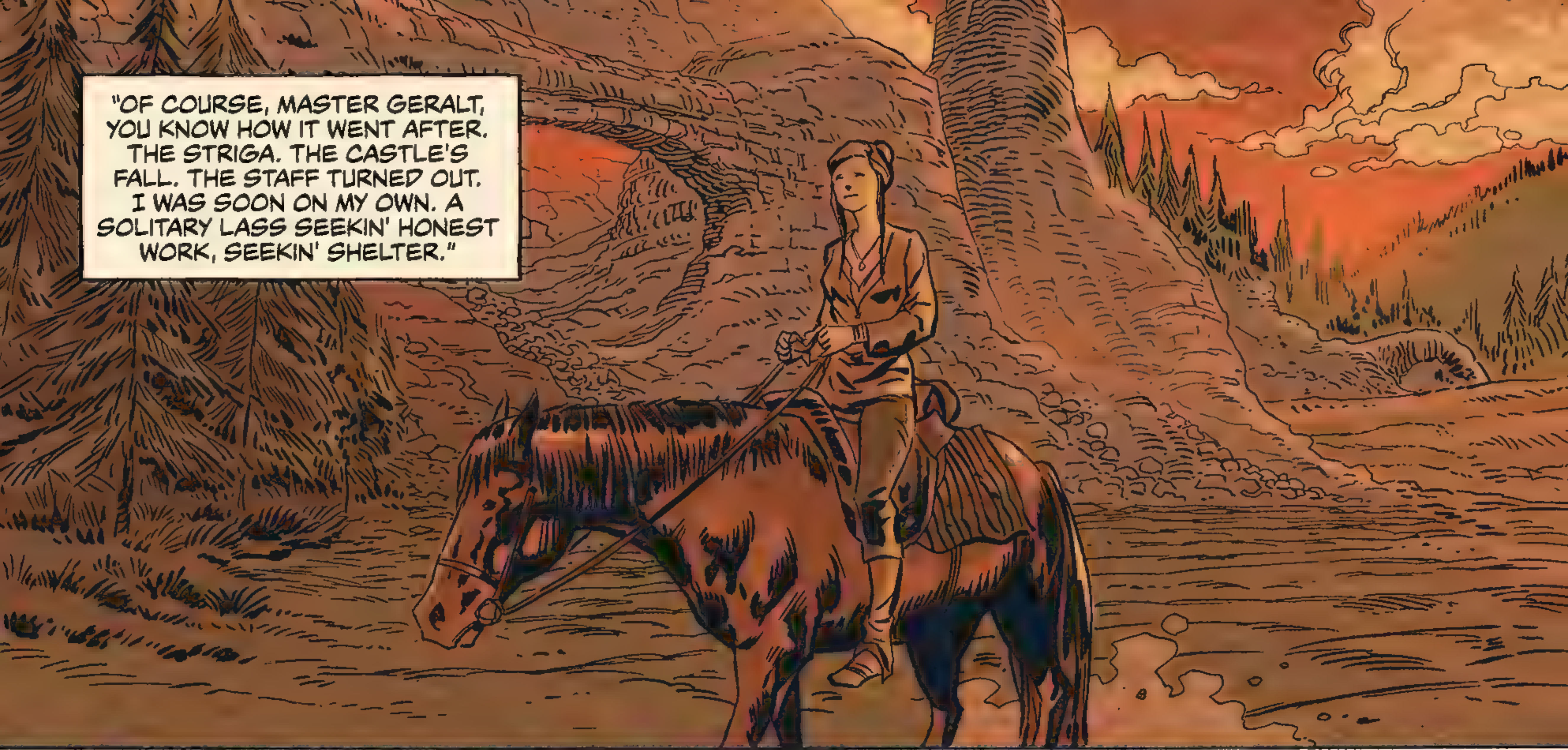
"ONCE, AGES PAST,
I WAS A MIDWIFE. NOT A
PEASANT WOMAN'S SECOND,
NEITHER. NO. I WAS FIRST
MIDWIFE TO QUEEN ADDA.

"MEANIN' I SAW THE *HORROR*
SHE PUSHED FORTH. NO SIGHT'S
EVER SICKENED ME SO. THOUGHT
I'D DROP DEAD ON THE SPOT,
SEEIN' THAT CREATURE *CRAWL*
FROM BETWEEN HER LEGS.

SO...I'M
MAERLINA.
PRIESTESS TO
SOME, HARLOT
TO OTHERS.

I USED TO
SEETHE TO BE
CALLED ANYTHIN'
BUT MY NAME. YET MY
INTENTIONS REMAIN
AS PURE NOW AS THEY
EVER WERE.

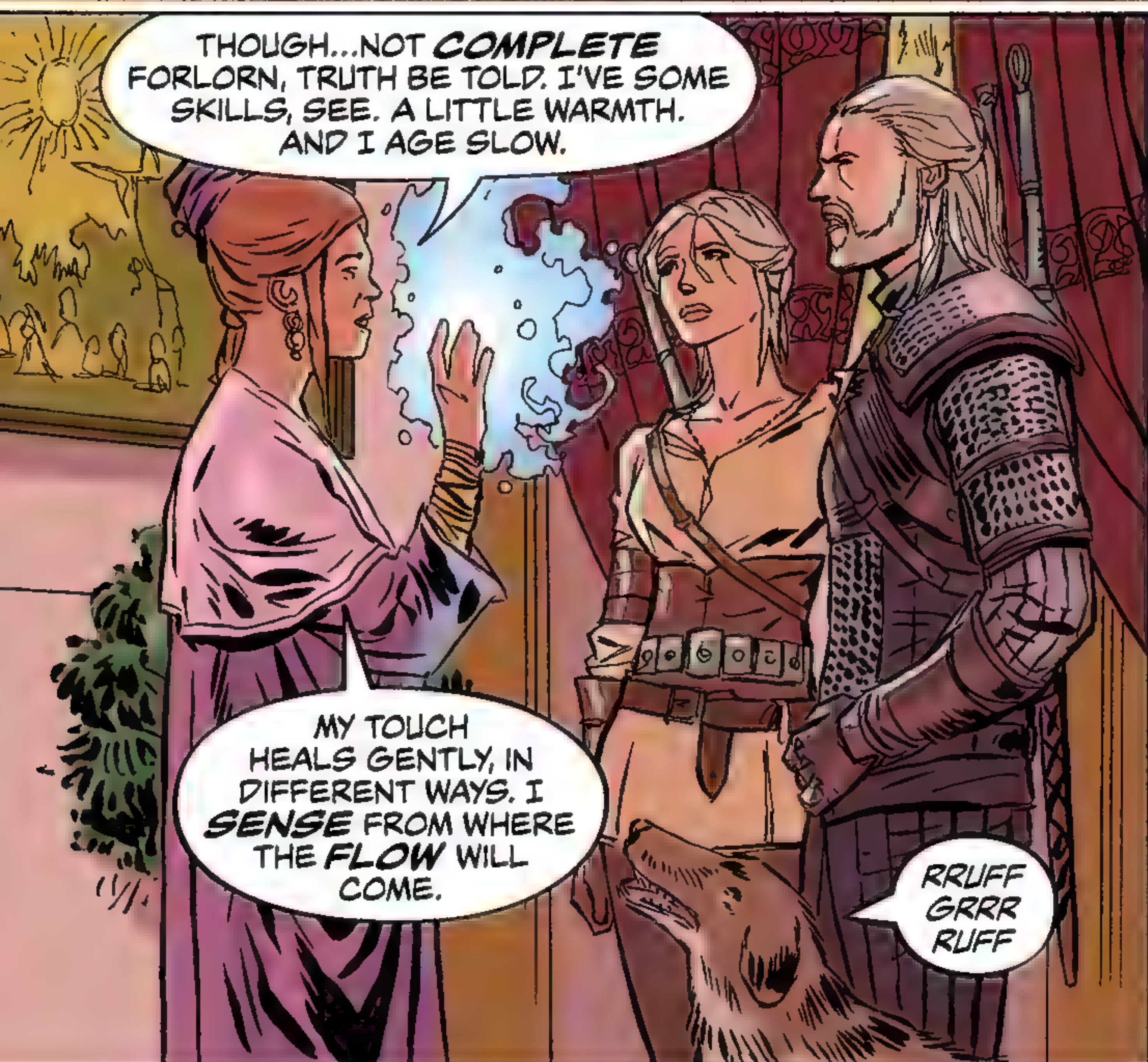
"OF COURSE, MASTER GERALT, YOU KNOW HOW IT WENT AFTER THE STRIGA. THE CASTLE'S FALL. THE STAFF TURNED OUT. I WAS SOON ON MY OWN. A SOLITARY LASS SEEKIN' HONEST WORK, SEEKIN' SHELTER."



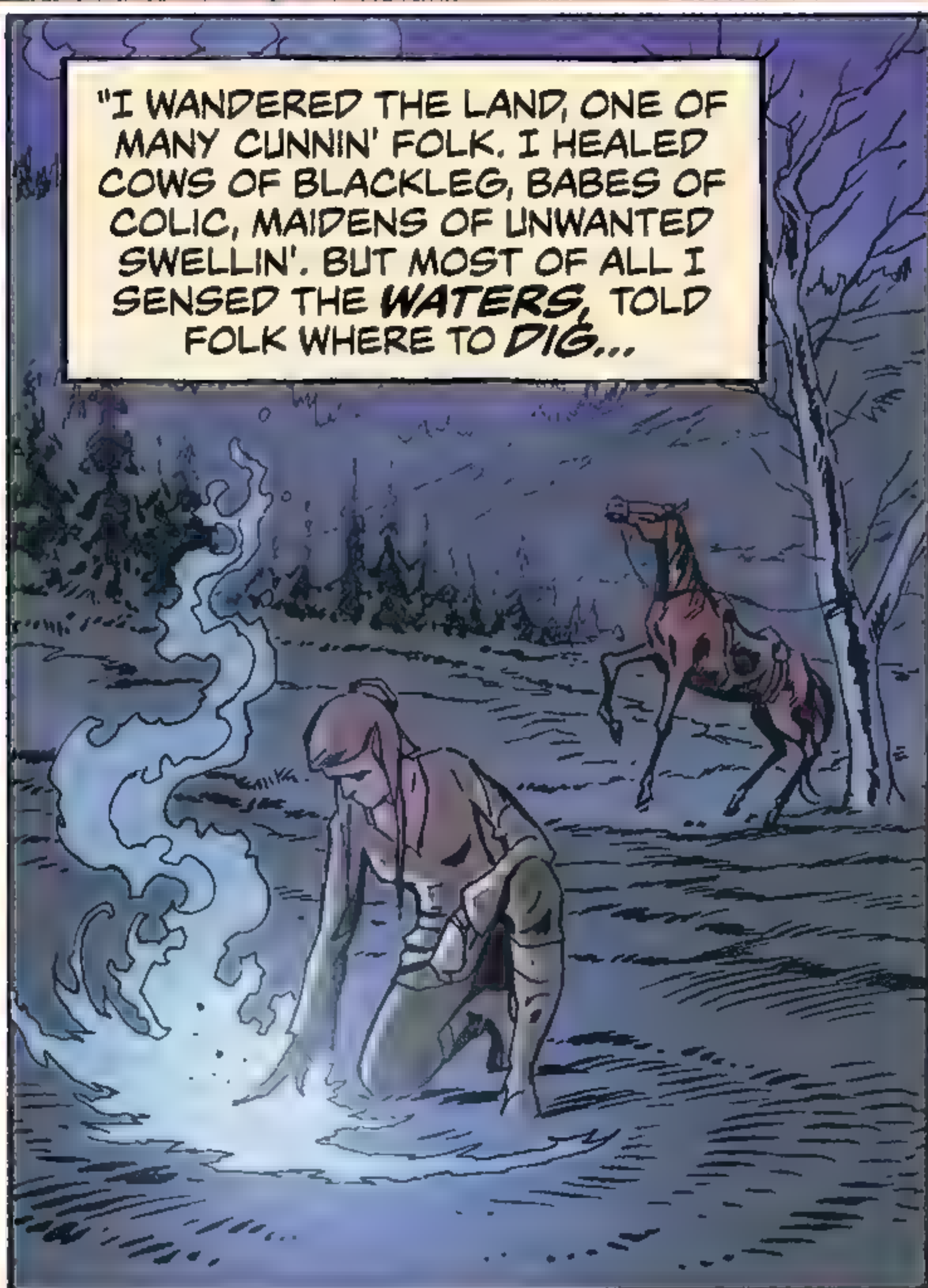
THOUGH...NOT **COMPLETE** FORLORN, TRUTH BE TOLD. I'VE SOME SKILLS, SEE. A LITTLE WARMTH. AND I AGE SLOW.

MY TOUCH HEALS GENTLY, IN DIFFERENT WAYS. I **SENSE** FROM WHERE THE **FLOW** WILL COME.

RRUFF
GRRR
RUFF

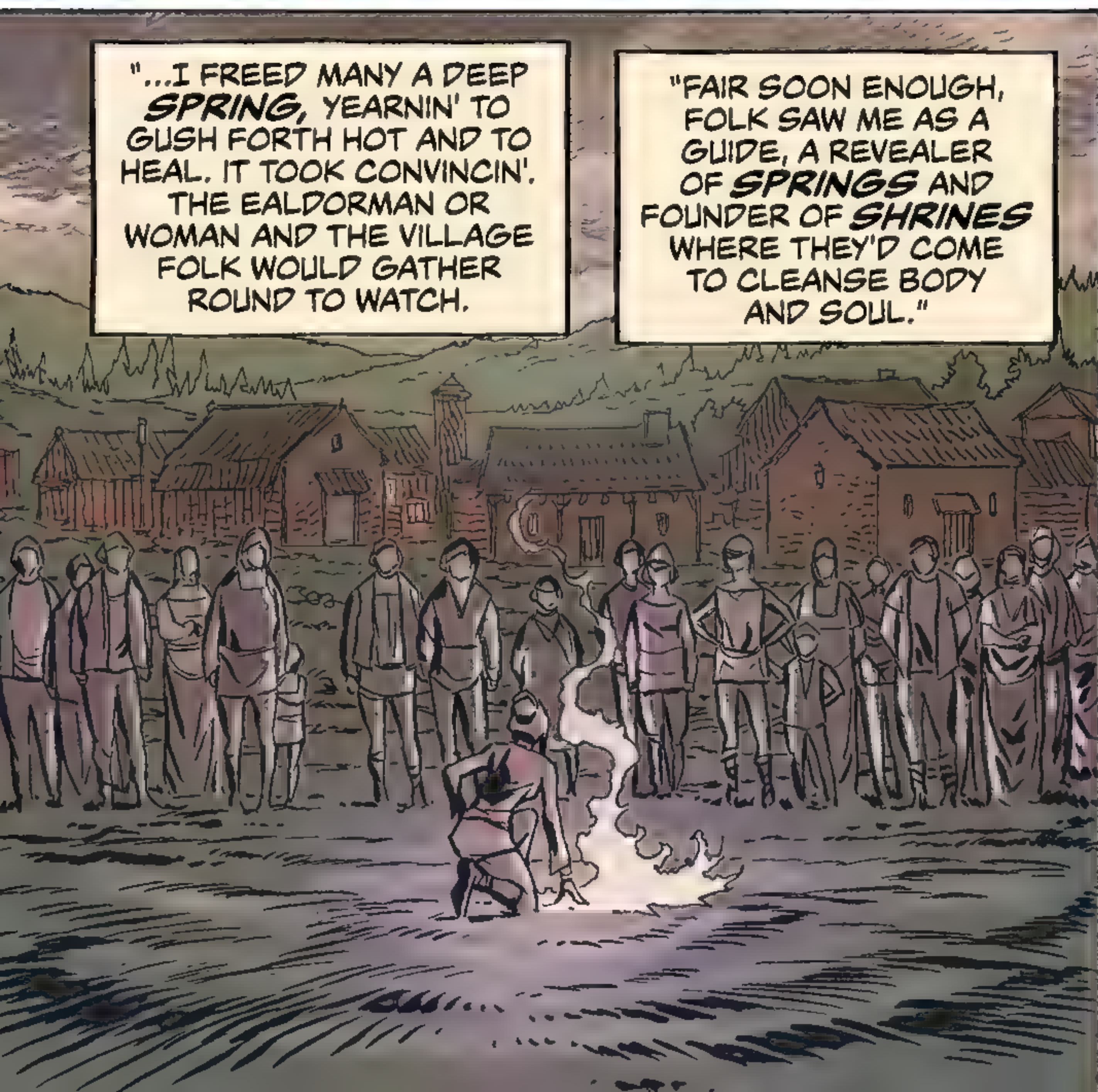


"I WANDERED THE LAND, ONE OF MANY CUNNIN' FOLK. I HEALED COWS OF BLACKLEG, BABES OF COLIC, MAIDENS OF UNWANTED SWELLIN'. BUT MOST OF ALL I SENSED THE **WATERS**, TOLD FOLK WHERE TO **DIG**..."



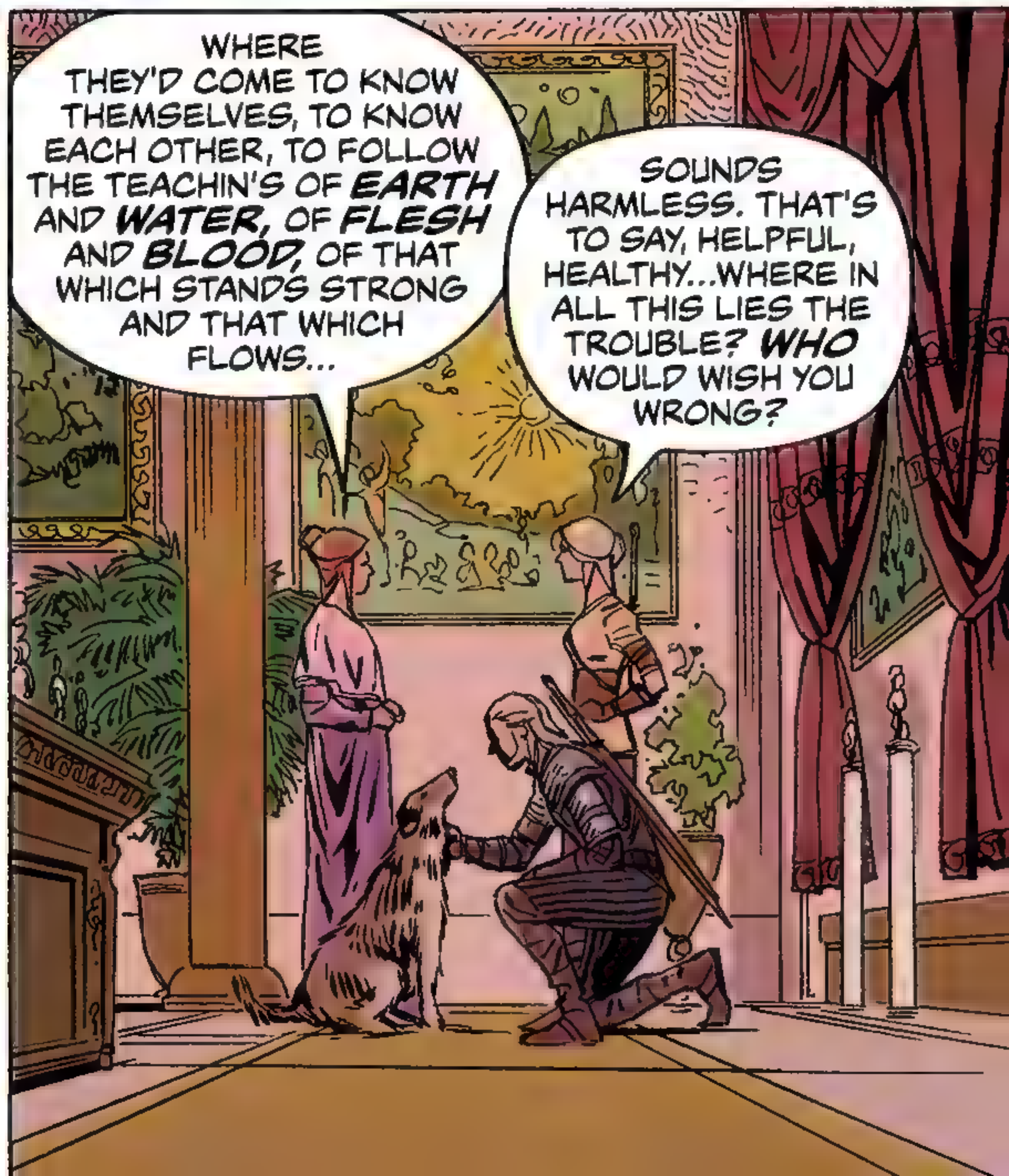
"...I FREED MANY A DEEP **SPRING**, YEARNIN' TO GUSH FORTH HOT AND TO HEAL. IT TOOK CONVINCIN'. THE EALDORMAN OR WOMAN AND THE VILLAGE FOLK WOULD GATHER ROUND TO WATCH.

"FAIR SOON ENOUGH, FOLK SAW ME AS A GUIDE, A REVEALER OF **SPRINGS** AND FOUNDER OF **SHRINES** WHERE THEY'D COME TO CLEANSE BODY AND SOUL."



WHERE THEY'D COME TO KNOW THEMSELVES, TO KNOW EACH OTHER, TO FOLLOW THE TEACHIN'S OF **EARTH** AND **WATER**, OF **FLESH** AND **BLOOD**, OF THAT WHICH STANDS STRONG AND THAT WHICH FLOWS...

SOUNDS HARMLESS. THAT'S TO SAY, HELPFUL, HEALTHY...WHERE IN ALL THIS LIES THE TROUBLE? **WHO** WOULD WISH YOU WRONG?





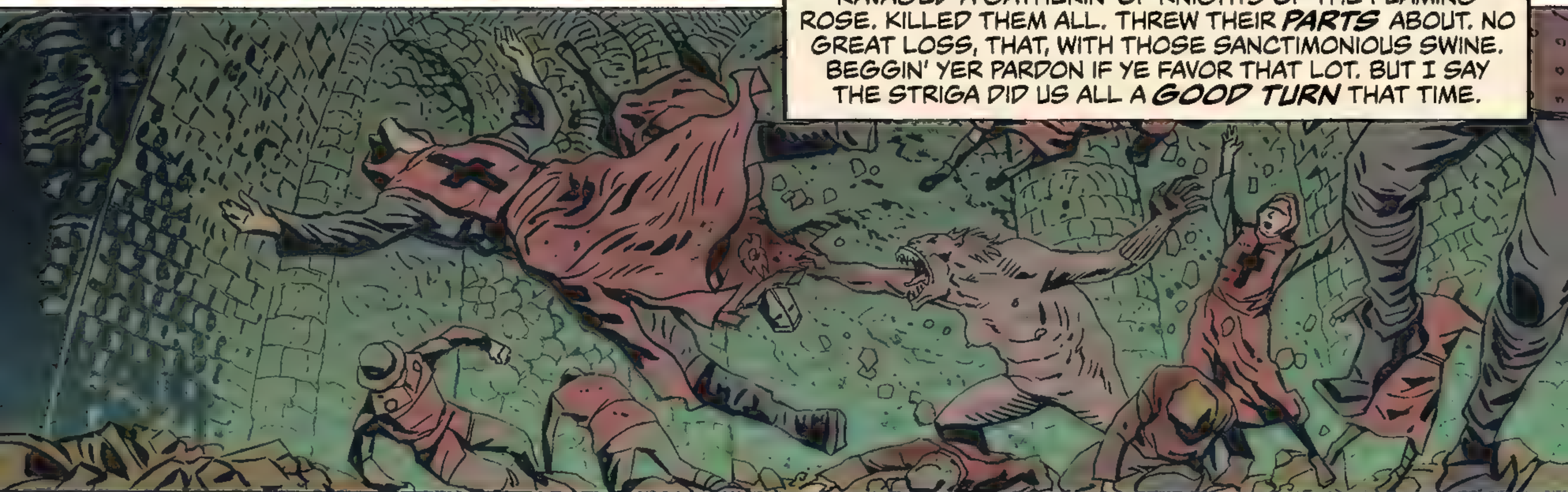
SOMEONE,
AND I DO WISH
I KNEW WHO.

THERE'S
ANOTHER STRIGA,
WITCHER. I CAN'T BE
SURE WHERE IT'S HOLED
UP. NOR BE SURE OF THE
CURSE. IN FACT, I'M NOT
SURE OF **ANYTHIN'**.



"EXCEPT...SEVEN MONTHS PAST, IT
TORE APART AN INN. **BUTCHERED** MANY
GOOD FOLK. BLOOD EVERYWHERE.

"SINCE THEN, IT'S BEEN BLOOD AND MORE BLOOD.
RAVAGED A GATHERIN' OF KNIGHTS OF THE FLAMING
ROSE. KILLED THEM ALL. THREW THEIR **PARTS** ABOUT. NO
GREAT LOSS, THAT, WITH THOSE SANCTIMONIOUS SWINE.
BEGGIN' YER PARDON IF YE FAVOR THAT LOT. BUT I SAY
THE STRIGA DID US ALL A **GOOD TURN** THAT TIME.



"BUT THEN IT SHOWED ITS UGLY **HEAD** AT A
BATH OF MY OWN MAKIN'. LATE ONE NIGHT, DURIN'
A PRIVATE GATHERIN'. MADE AN AWFUL MESS, IT
DID. KILLED A VISCOUNT'S SON. AND ON THE **CUSP**
OF THE POOR LAD LOSIN' HIS **INNOCENCE**."



TRAGIC.

IT WAS. AND
THE VISCOUNT HAD
SOME FINE WORDS FOR
ME, TOO. HE CAME TO ME RED
WITH FURY, BUT I'VE ALSO
WATERS THAT **COOL**,
FLUIDS THAT
SOOTHE.

HE LEFT MY BED,
MY CARE, DAYS LATER, TO
NURSE HIS GRIEF. BUT HE WAS
A MAN **FORLORN**, ROBBED OF
LIFE. I'VE NO DESIRE TO SEE
THAT HAPPEN TO ANY
OTHER.

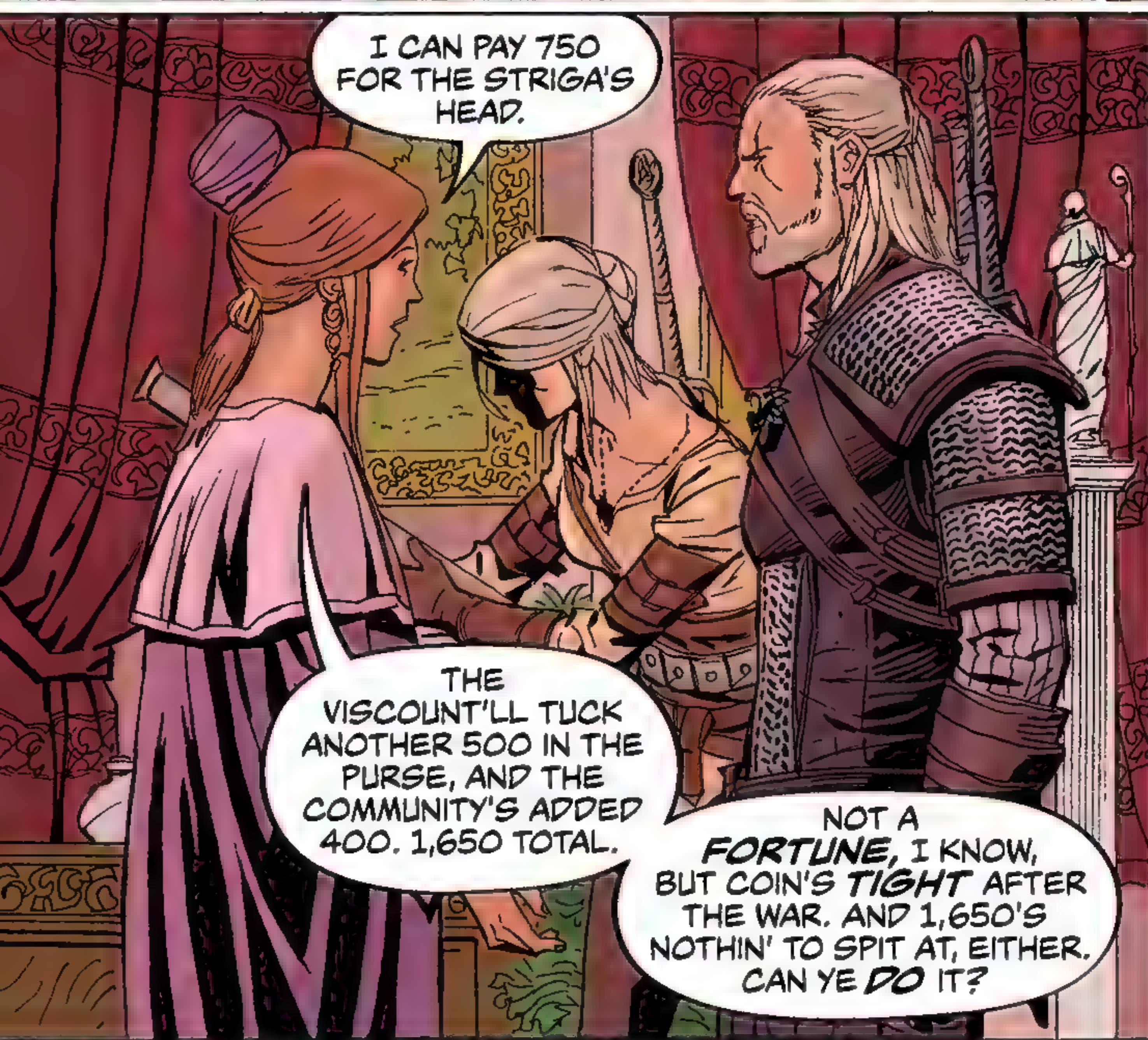




THE KILLIN' SITES I'VE MARKED ON THIS MAP. THE FROLICKIN' IS THE DRAFTSMAN'S DOIN', NOT MINE.



JIPES IS HIS NAME. *CAN'T* HELP BUT DRAW *TANGLED* BODIES, ROUGH *EMBRACES*. BUT HE'S A GOOD MAN OTHERWISE.



I CAN PAY 750 FOR THE STRIGA'S HEAD.

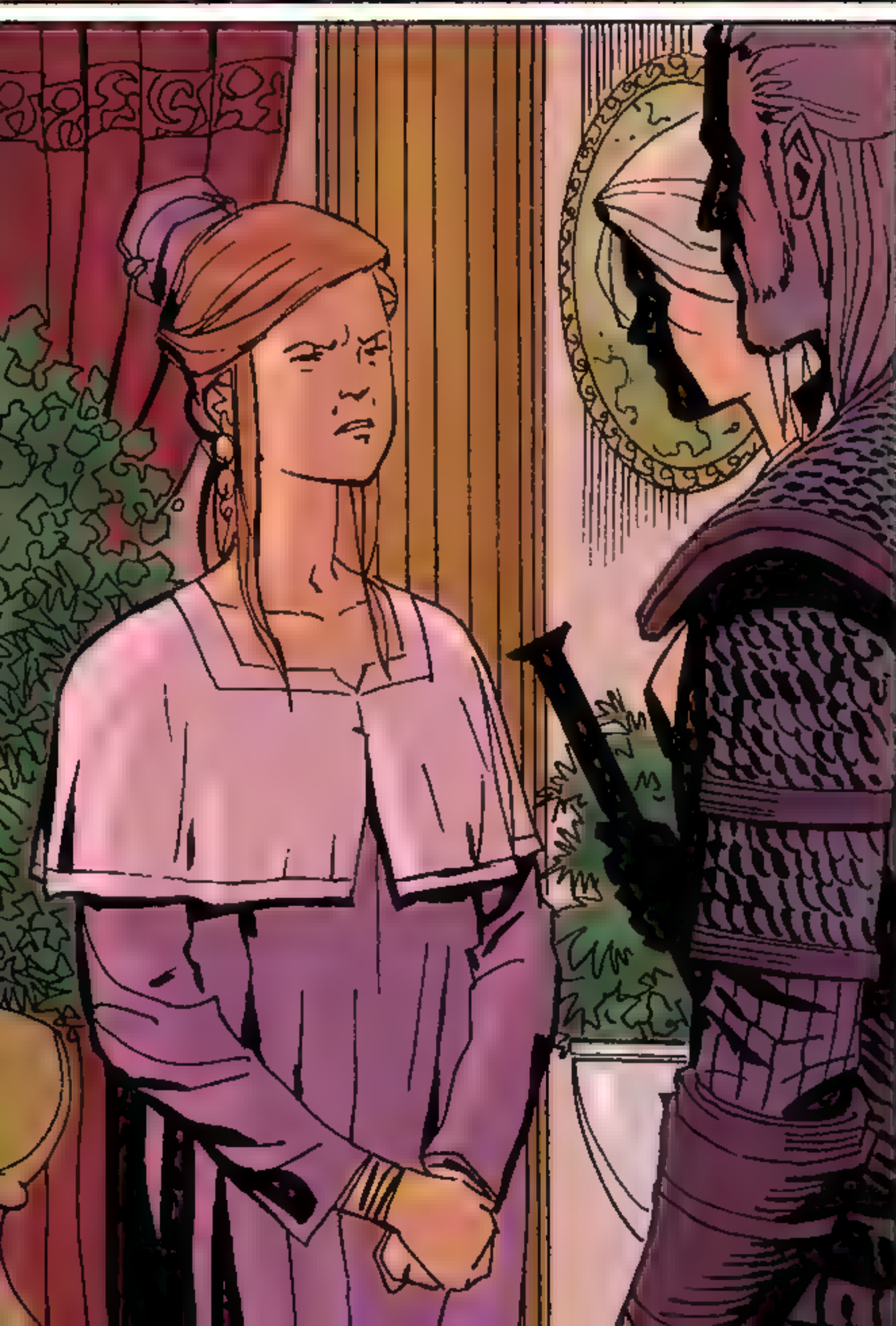
THE VISCOUNT'LL TUCK ANOTHER 500 IN THE PURSE, AND THE COMMUNITY'S ADDED 400. 1,650 TOTAL.

NOT A FORTUNE, I KNOW, BUT COIN'S TIGHT AFTER THE WAR. AND 1,650'S NOTHIN' TO SPIT AT, EITHER. CAN YE DO IT?

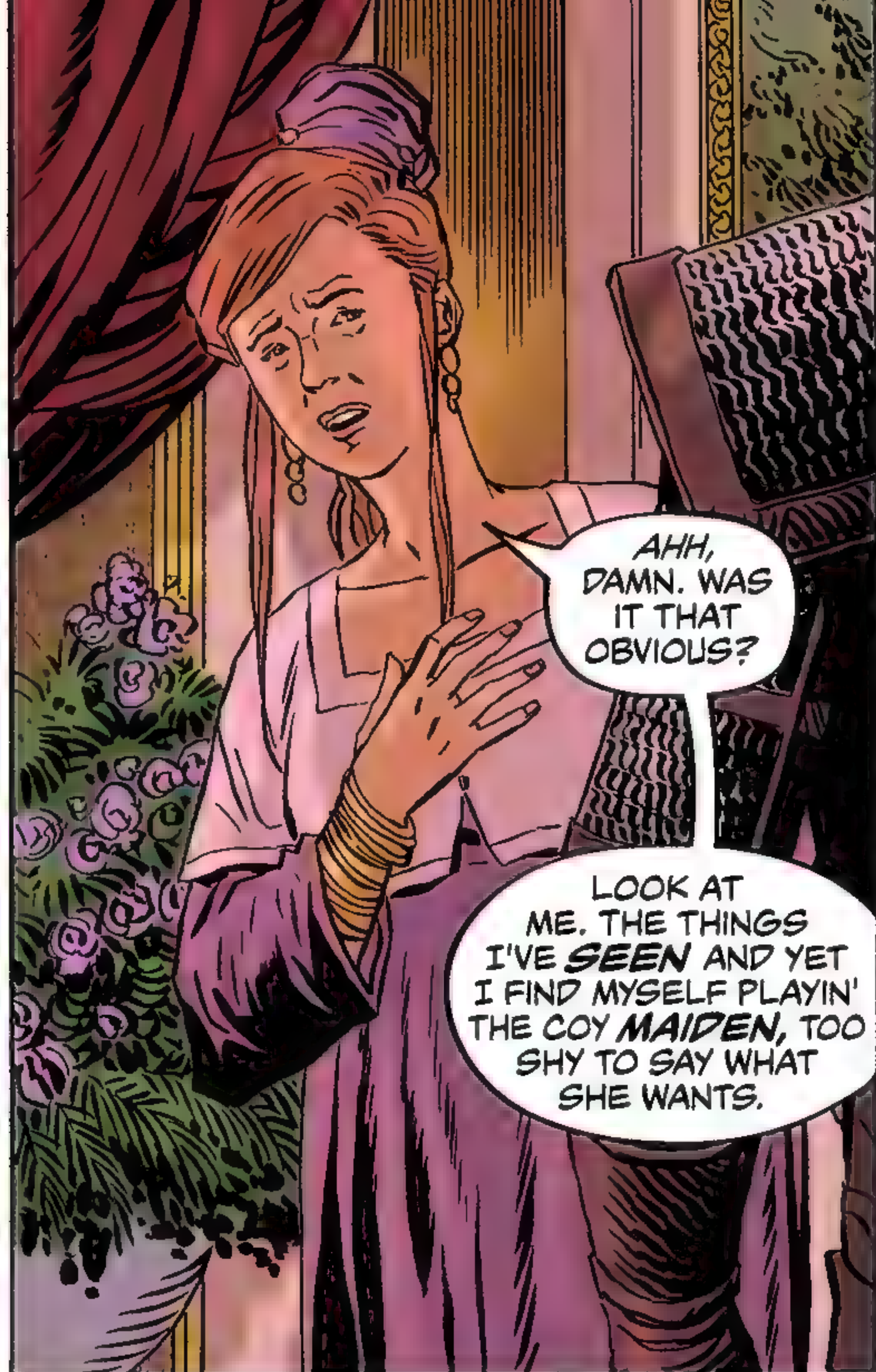


GONNA NEED TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT FULL MOON. BUT WE CAN ASK AROUND UNTIL THEN.

YES, YES, OF COURSE.



YOU'VE NOT TOLD US SOMETHING. WHAT IS IT?



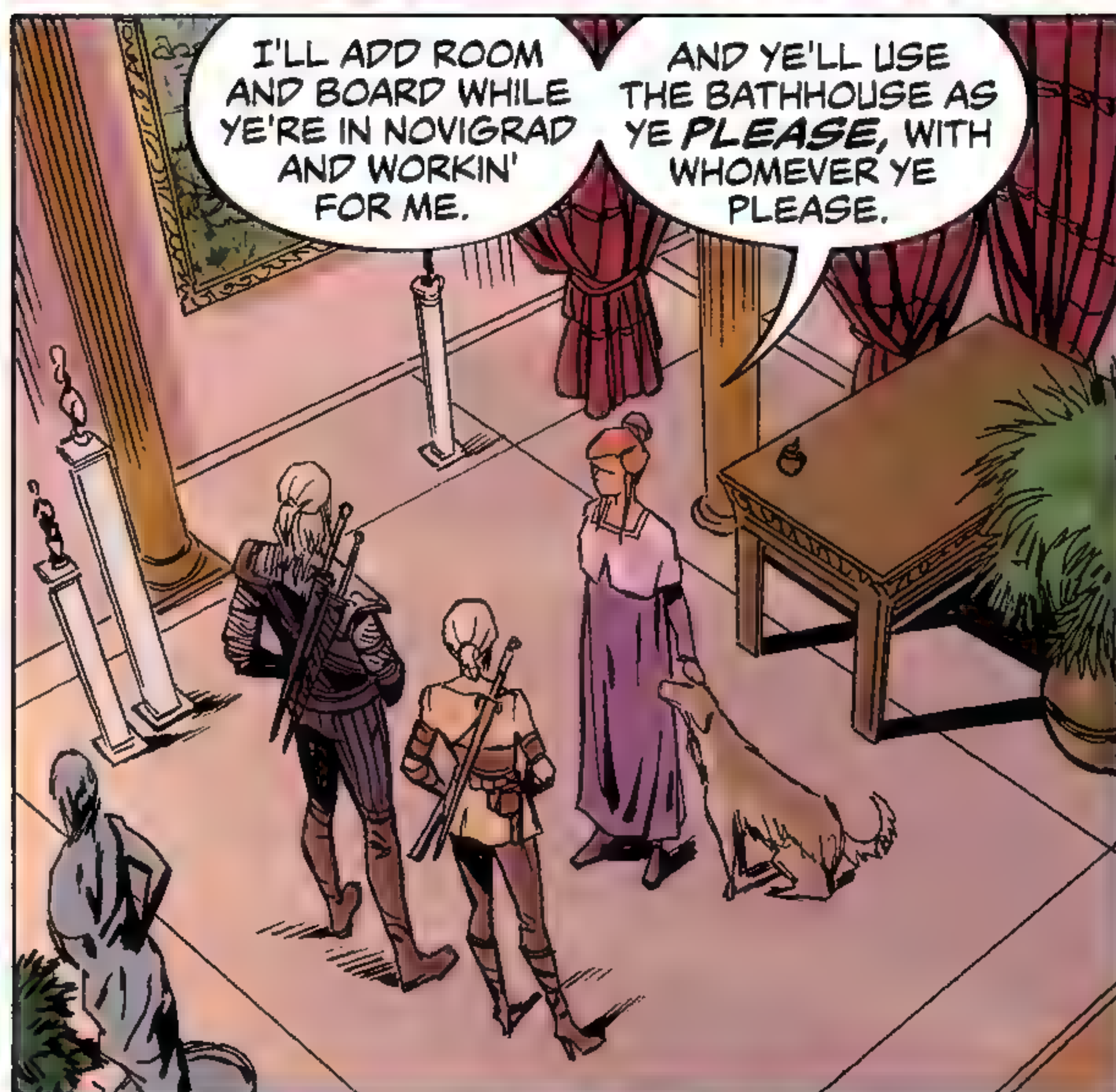
AHH, DAMN. WAS IT THAT OBVIOUS?

LOOK AT ME. THE THINGS I'VE **SEEN** AND YET I FIND MYSELF PLAYIN' THE COY MAIDEN, TOO SHY TO SAY WHAT SHE WANTS.



MASTER WITCHERS...IF YOU'VE TIME BEFORE THE NEXT FULL MOON, PERHAPS YOU COULD LOOK INTO WHAT MY POOR, FOOLISH SON'S DONE? I THINK HE'S TROUBLES OF HIS OWN.

HE'S NOT A SMART BOY, POOR ELID, BUT...HE'S NOT A BAD ONE, NEITHER. NOT REALLY.



I'LL ADD ROOM AND BOARD WHILE YE'RE IN NOVIGRAD AND WORKIN' FOR ME.

AND YE'LL USE THE BATHHOUSE AS YE **PLEASE**, WITH WHOMEVER YE PLEASE.



DAMN, YOU WITCHERS ARE A **SILENT** LOT. I'LL PAY 350 ON TOP OF WHAT'S PROMISED. CAN YE DO IT OR NOT?

WE'LL LOOK INTO IT, BUT NO PROMISES.



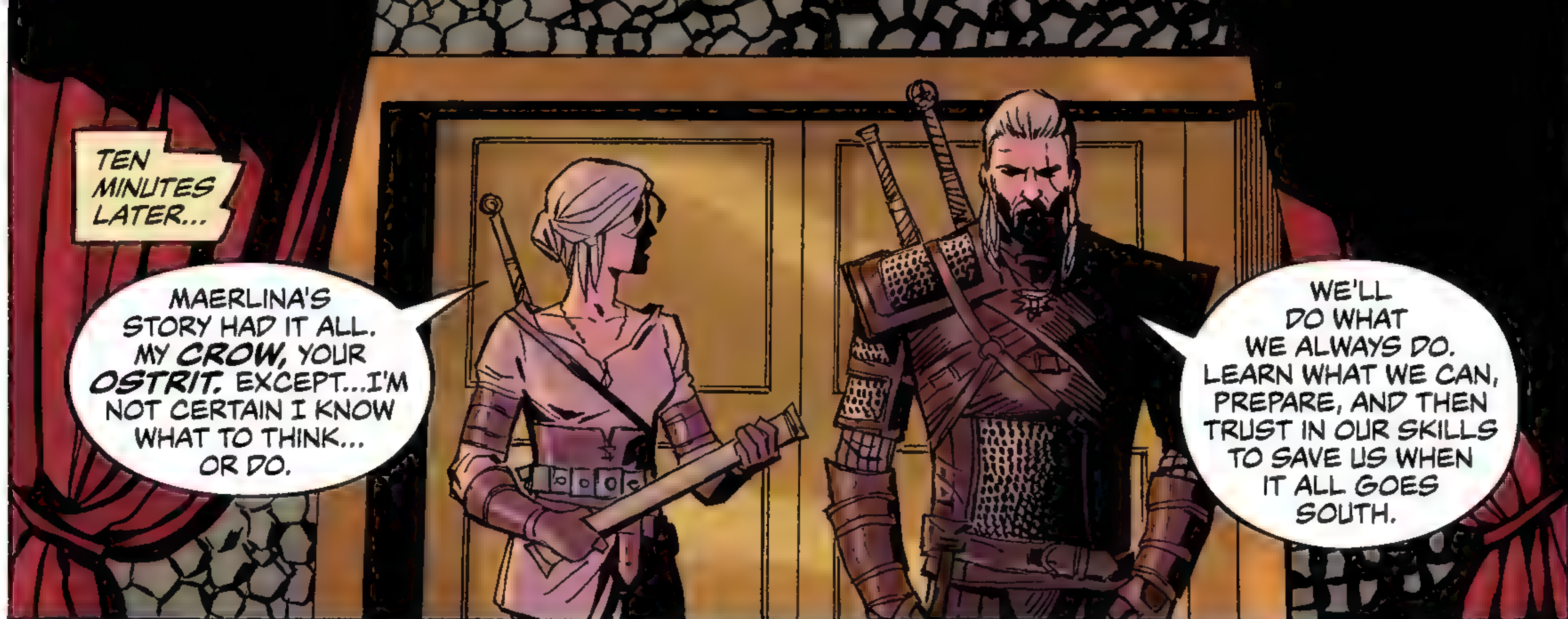
I'M RELIEVED, I AM. FOR I'M AT MY WIT'S END.

MY BOY ELID, GODS LOVE HIM, HE'S A HANDFUL. THERE'RE DAYS I WISH I'D NEVER LET OSTRIT **STICK ME** WITH CHILD. SNOBBY COURTIER.

BUT ELID'S MINE ALONE NOW. OSTRIT'S LONG DEAD. AND IT'S ONLY FAIR YOU KNOW ONE THING MORE ABOUT MY BOY.



SOMETIMES HE'S A CROW.



TEN MINUTES LATER...

MAERLINA'S STORY HAD IT ALL. MY **CROW**, YOUR **OSTRIT**. EXCEPT...I'M NOT CERTAIN I KNOW WHAT TO THINK... OR DO.

WE'LL DO WHAT WE ALWAYS DO. LEARN WHAT WE CAN, PREPARE, AND THEN TRUST IN OUR SKILLS TO SAVE US WHEN IT ALL GOES SOUTH.



THE NEXT DAY...

THERE YOU ARE, SIR. QUICKSILVER SOLUTION. HELLEBORE AND GINATIA PETALS. AIM TO BREW UP SOMETHIN' INTERESTING?

LIKELY TO, YEAH.



THE BESTIARY ON **CURSED** CREATURES.

MIGHT I ASSIST YOU WITH ANYTHING ELSE?

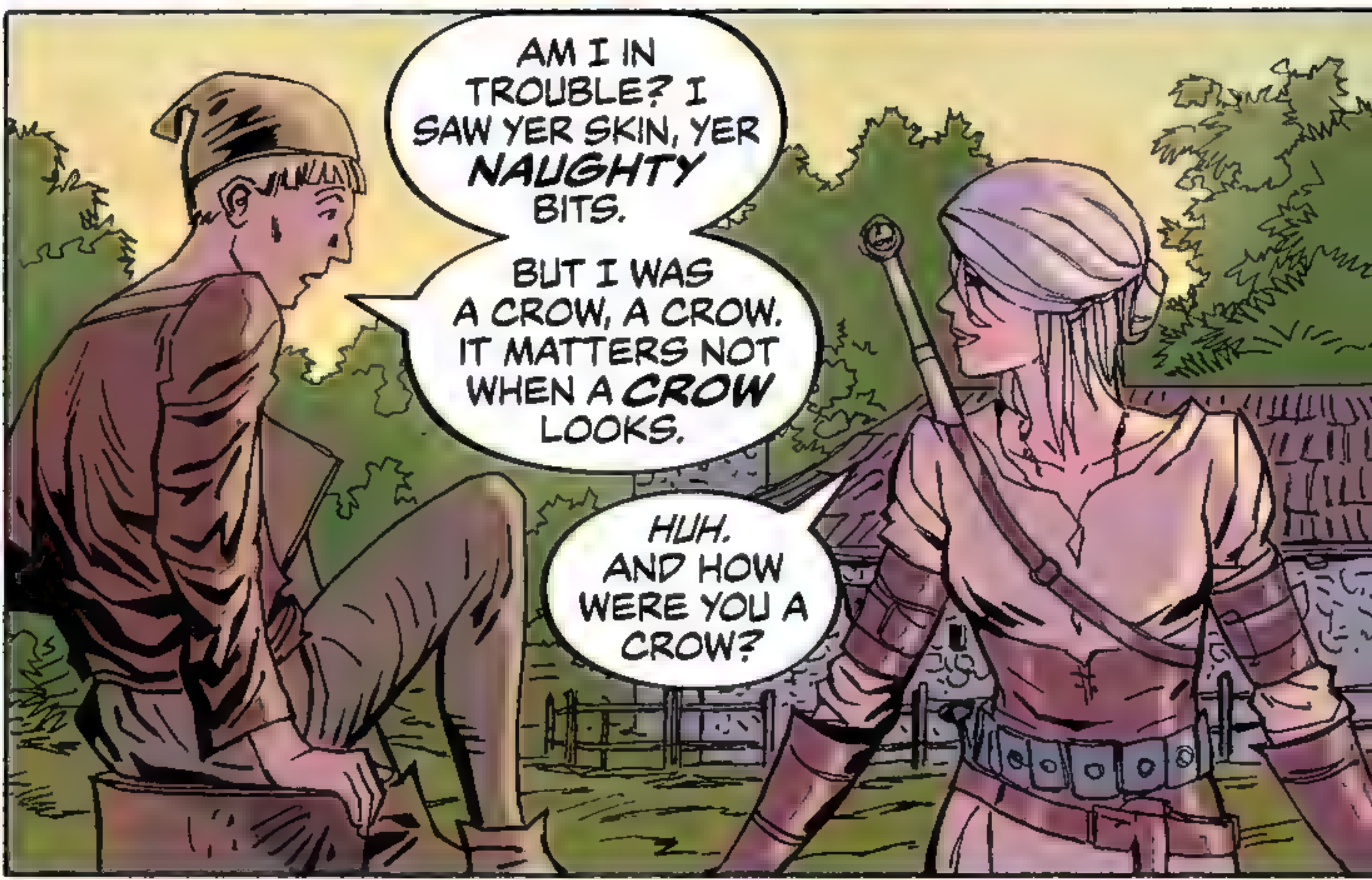
I MUST SAY, WE GET VERY FEW REQUESTS FOR THE BOOK. AND...EVEN FEWER FROM...*UMM*...MEN SO...*UMM*...RUGGED... SO STRIKING...



ELID? MY NAME IS **CIRI**. YOUR MOTHER SENT ME.

I SAW YOU IN THE WATER. IN THE WATER. SPLASHIN'.

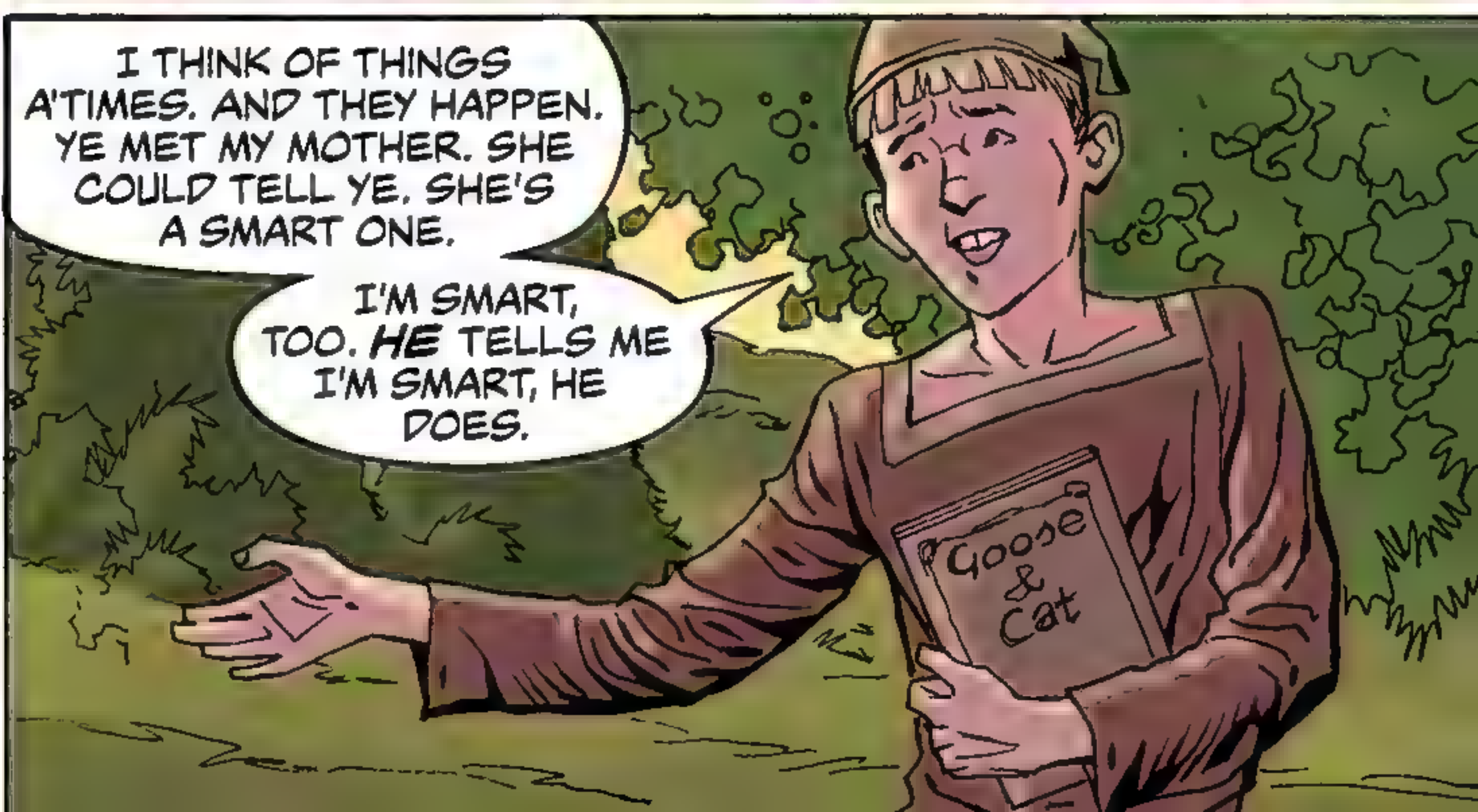
DID YOU?



AM I IN TROUBLE? I SAW YER SKIN, YER **NAUGHTY** BITS.

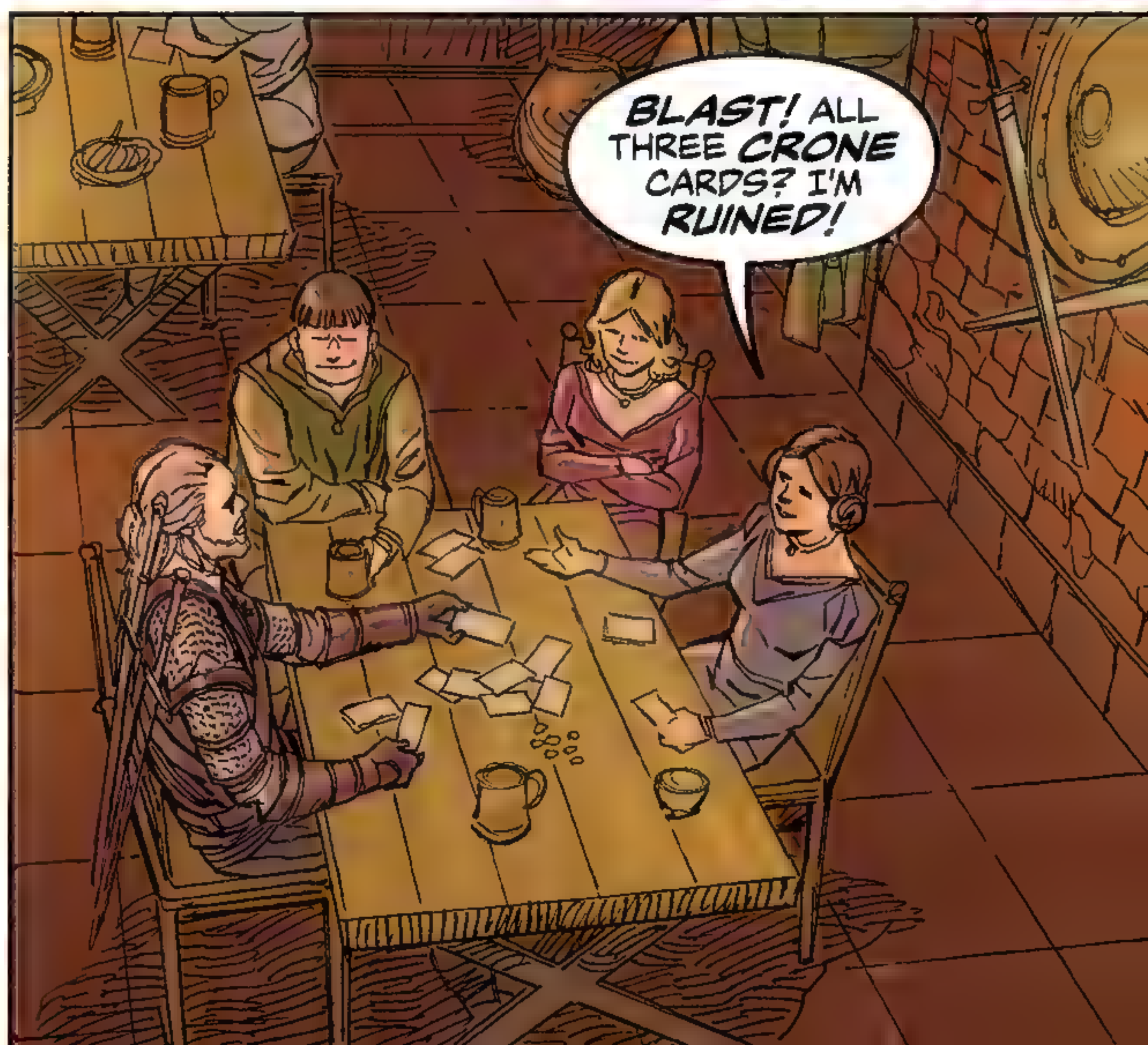
BUT I WAS A CROW, A CROW. IT MATTERS NOT WHEN A **CROW** LOOKS.

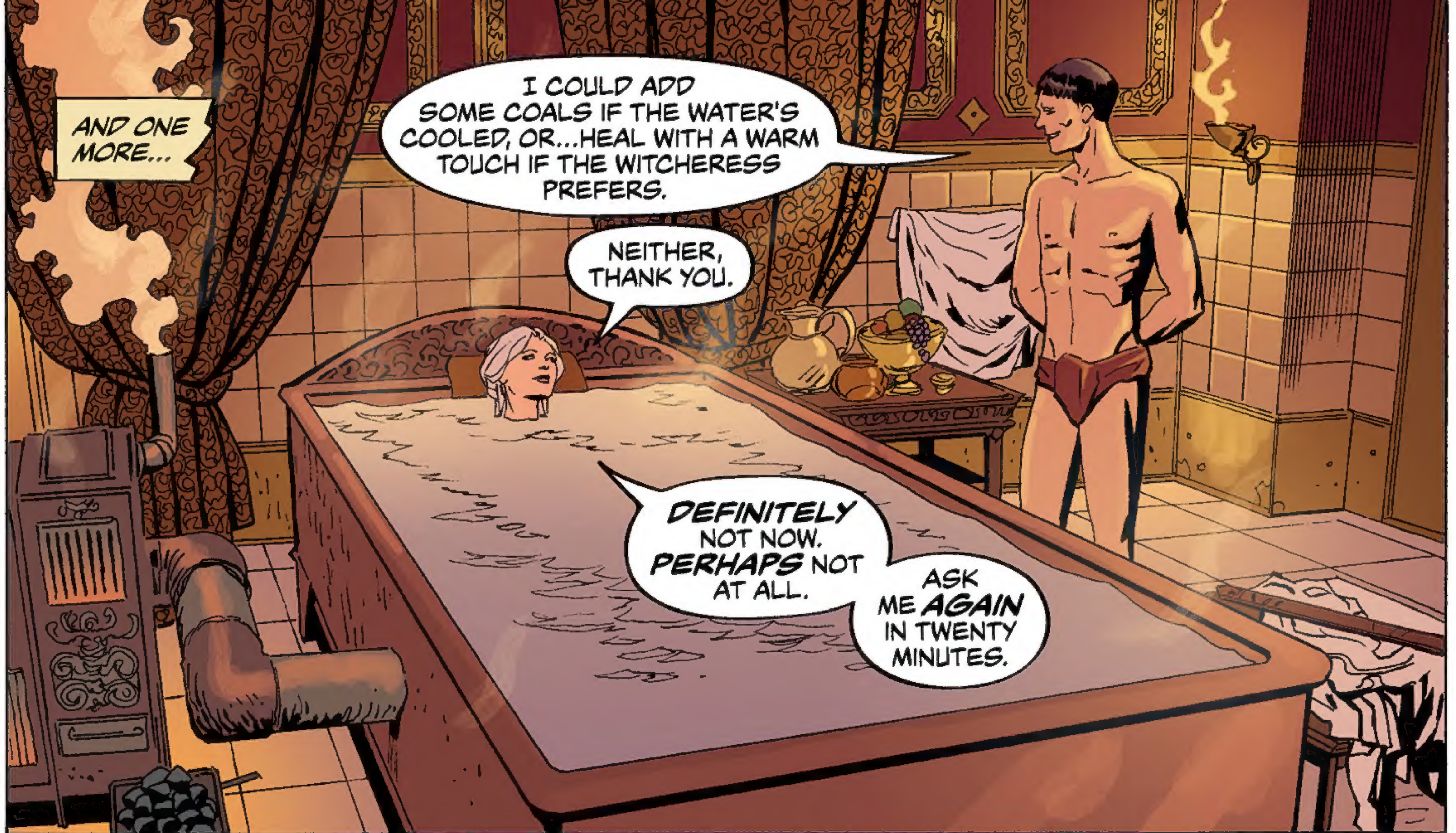
HUH. AND HOW WERE YOU A CROW?



I THINK OF THINGS A'TIMES. AND THEY HAPPEN. YE MET MY MOTHER. SHE COULD TELL YE, SHE'S A SMART ONE.

I'M SMART, TOO. **HE** TELLS ME I'M SMART, HE DOES.





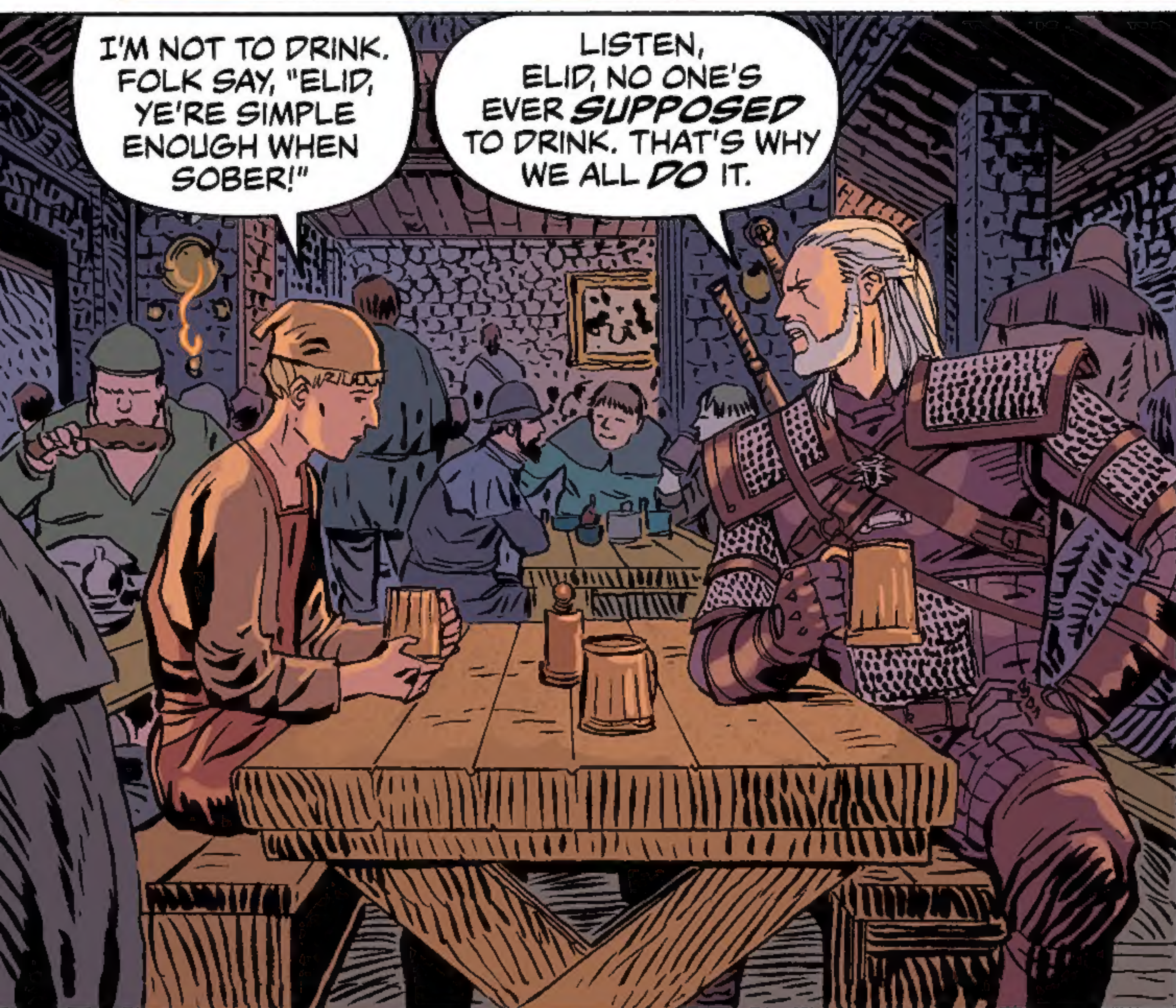
AND ONE MORE...

I COULD ADD SOME COALS IF THE WATER'S COOLED, OR...HEAL WITH A WARM TOUCH IF THE WITCHERESS PREFERS.

NEITHER, THANK YOU.

DEFINITELY NOT NOW. PERHAPS NOT AT ALL.

ASK ME AGAIN IN TWENTY MINUTES.



I'M NOT TO DRINK. FOLK SAY, "ELID, YE'RE SIMPLE ENOUGH WHEN SOBER!"

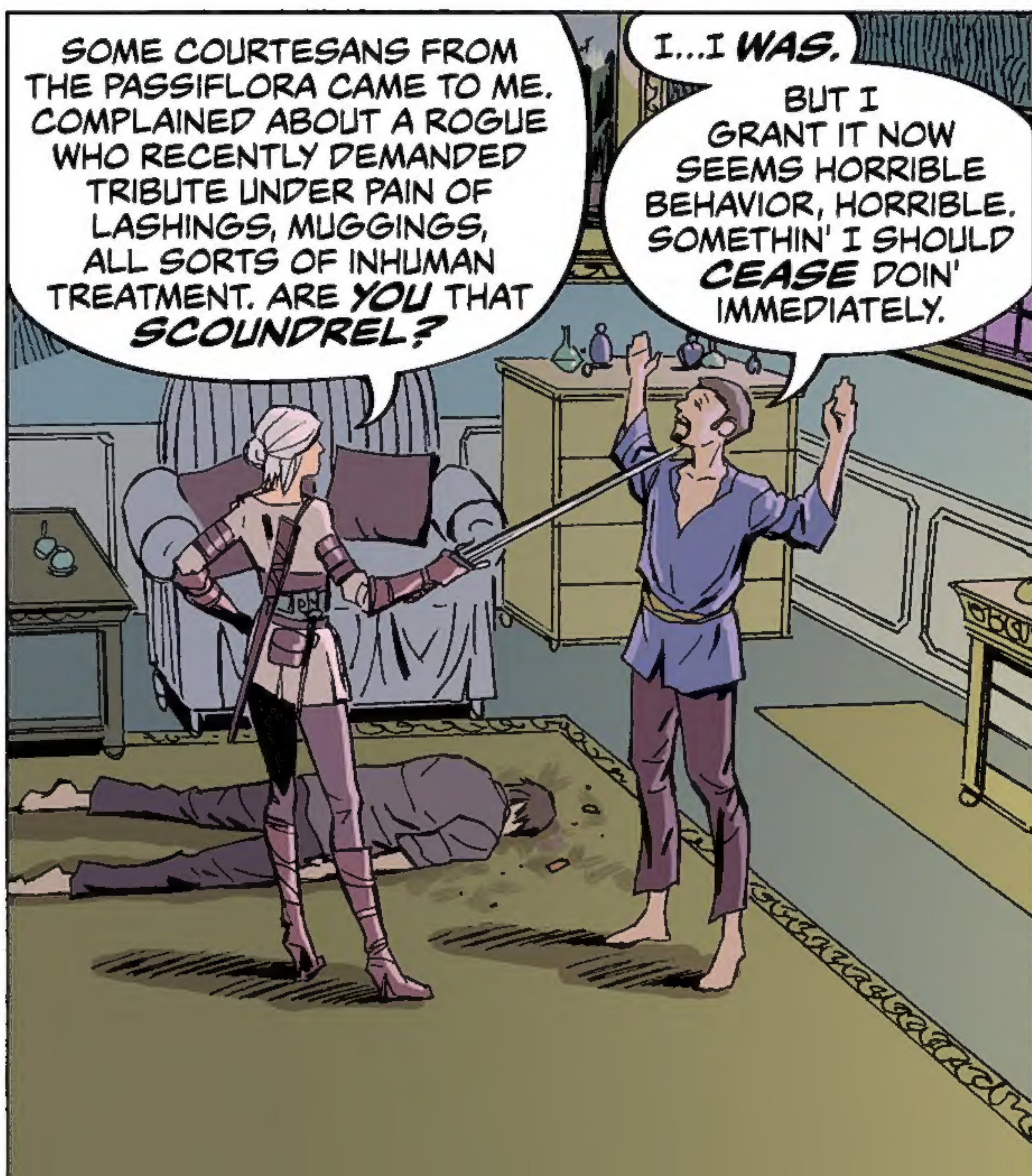
LISTEN, ELID, NO ONE'S EVER *SUPPOSED* TO DRINK. THAT'S WHY WE ALL *DO* IT.



I...I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

ONE MORE TANKARD AND YOU WILL.

OR AT LEAST YOU WON'T CARE.



SOME COURTESANS FROM THE PASSIFLORA CAME TO ME. COMPLAINED ABOUT A ROGUE WHO RECENTLY DEMANDED TRIBUTE UNDER PAIN OF LASHINGS, MUGGINGS, ALL SORTS OF INHUMAN TREATMENT. ARE *YOU* THAT *SCOUNDREL*?

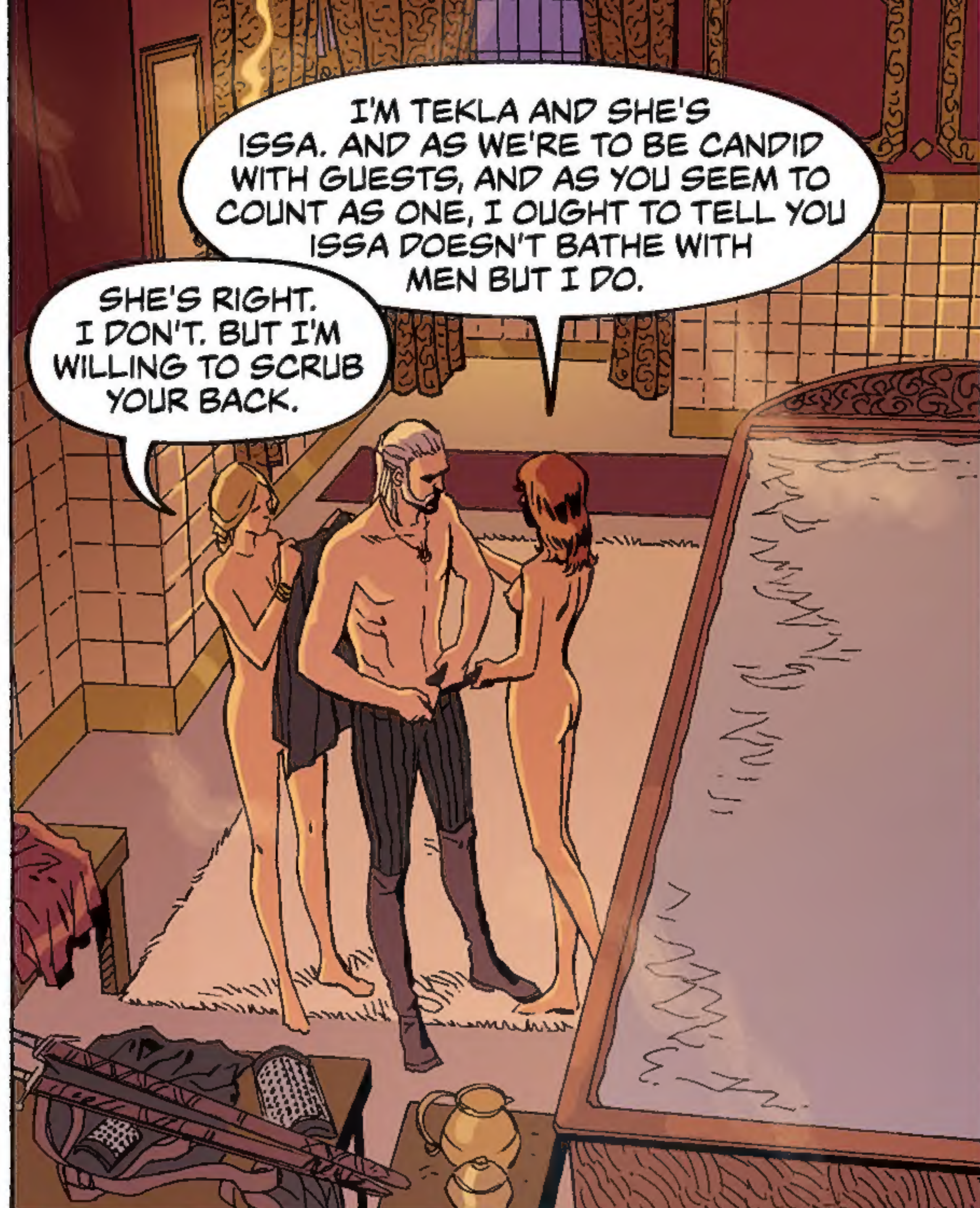
I...I WAS.

BUT I GRANT IT NOW SEEMS HORRIBLE BEHAVIOR, HORRIBLE. SOMETHIN' I SHOULD *CEASE DOIN'* IMMEDIATELY.



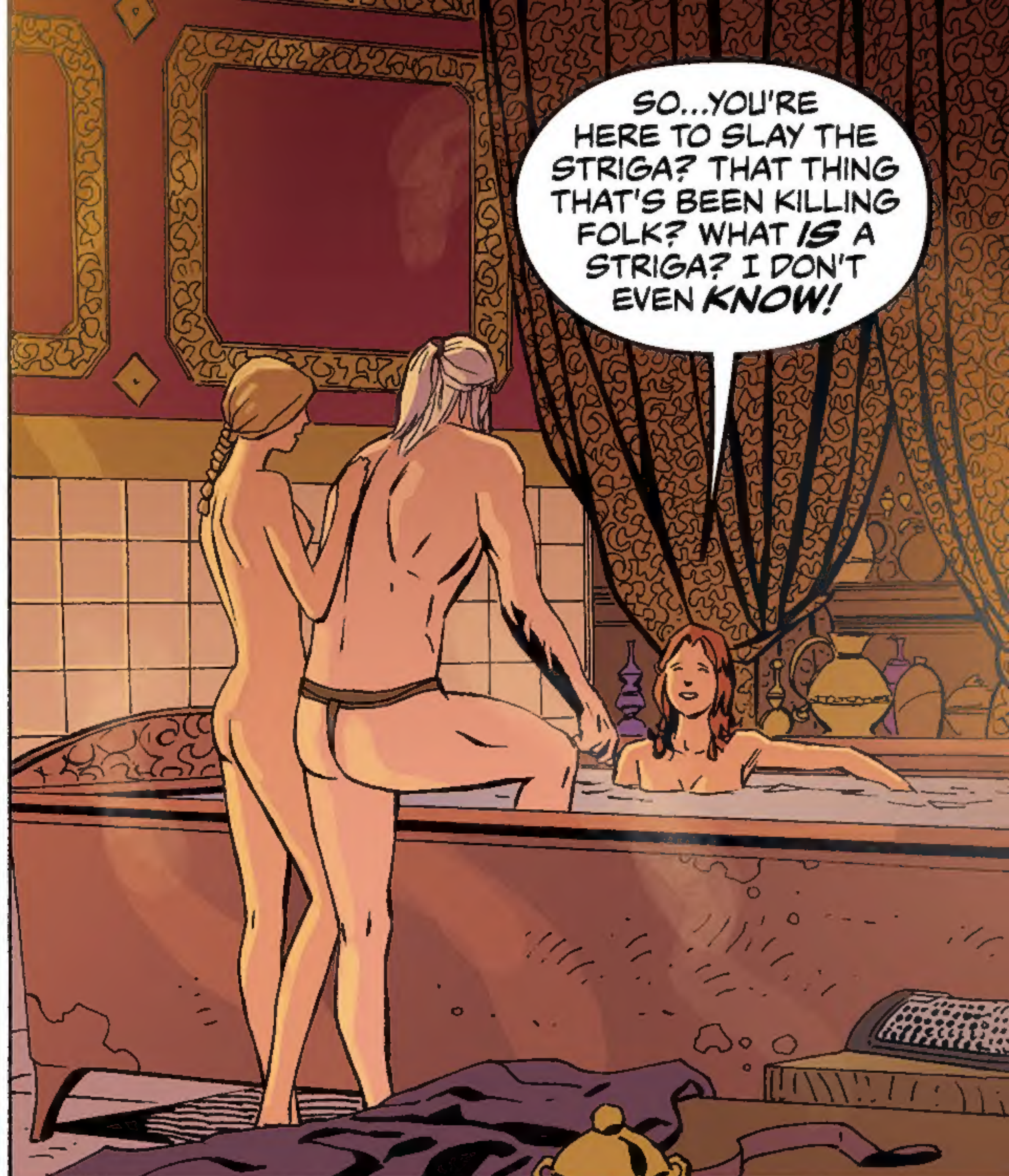
I'M NOT LOOKIN'!

I KNOW I'M NOT *SUPPOSED* TO LOOK!

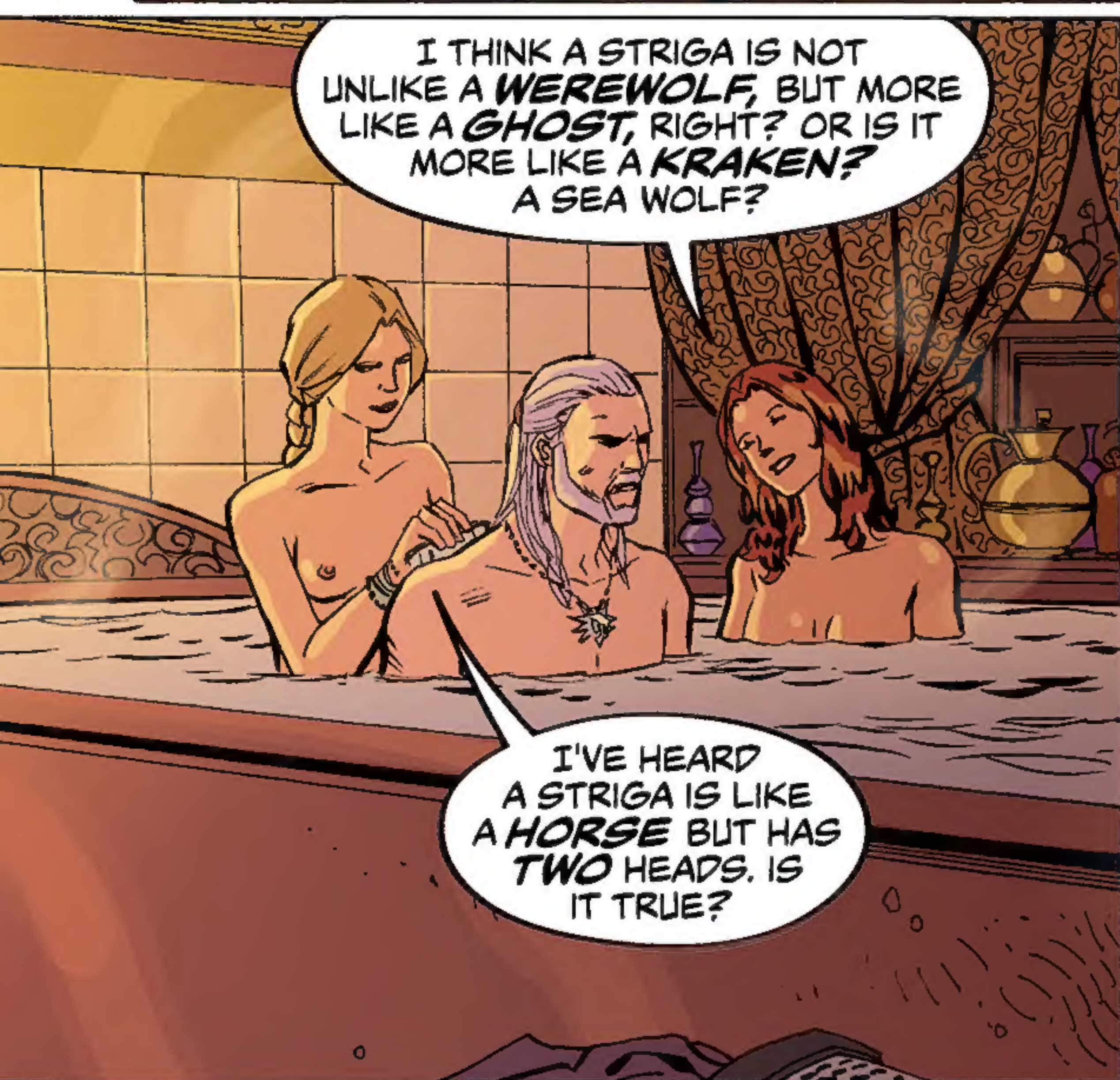


I'M TEKLA AND SHE'S ISSA. AND AS WE'RE TO BE CANDID WITH GUESTS, AND AS YOU SEEM TO COUNT AS ONE, I OUGHT TO TELL YOU ISSA DOESN'T BATHE WITH MEN BUT I DO.

SHE'S RIGHT. I DON'T. BUT I'M WILLING TO SCRUB YOUR BACK.

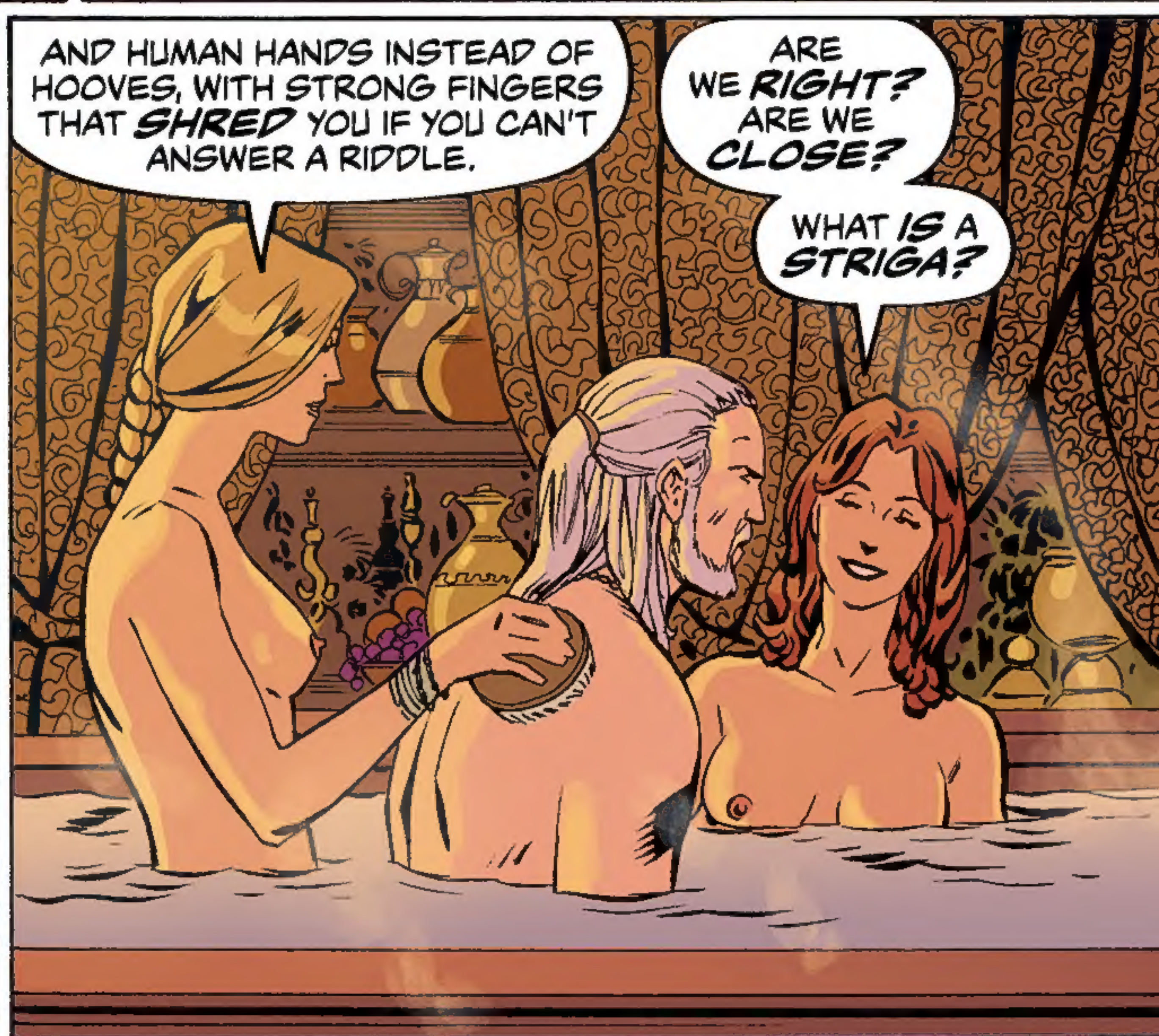


SO...YOU'RE HERE TO SLAY THE STRIGA? THAT THING THAT'S BEEN KILLING FOLK? WHAT IS A STRIGA? I DON'T EVEN KNOW!



I THINK A STRIGA IS NOT UNLIKE A **WEREWOLF**, BUT MORE LIKE A **GHOST**, RIGHT? OR IS IT MORE LIKE A **KRAKEN**? A SEA WOLF?

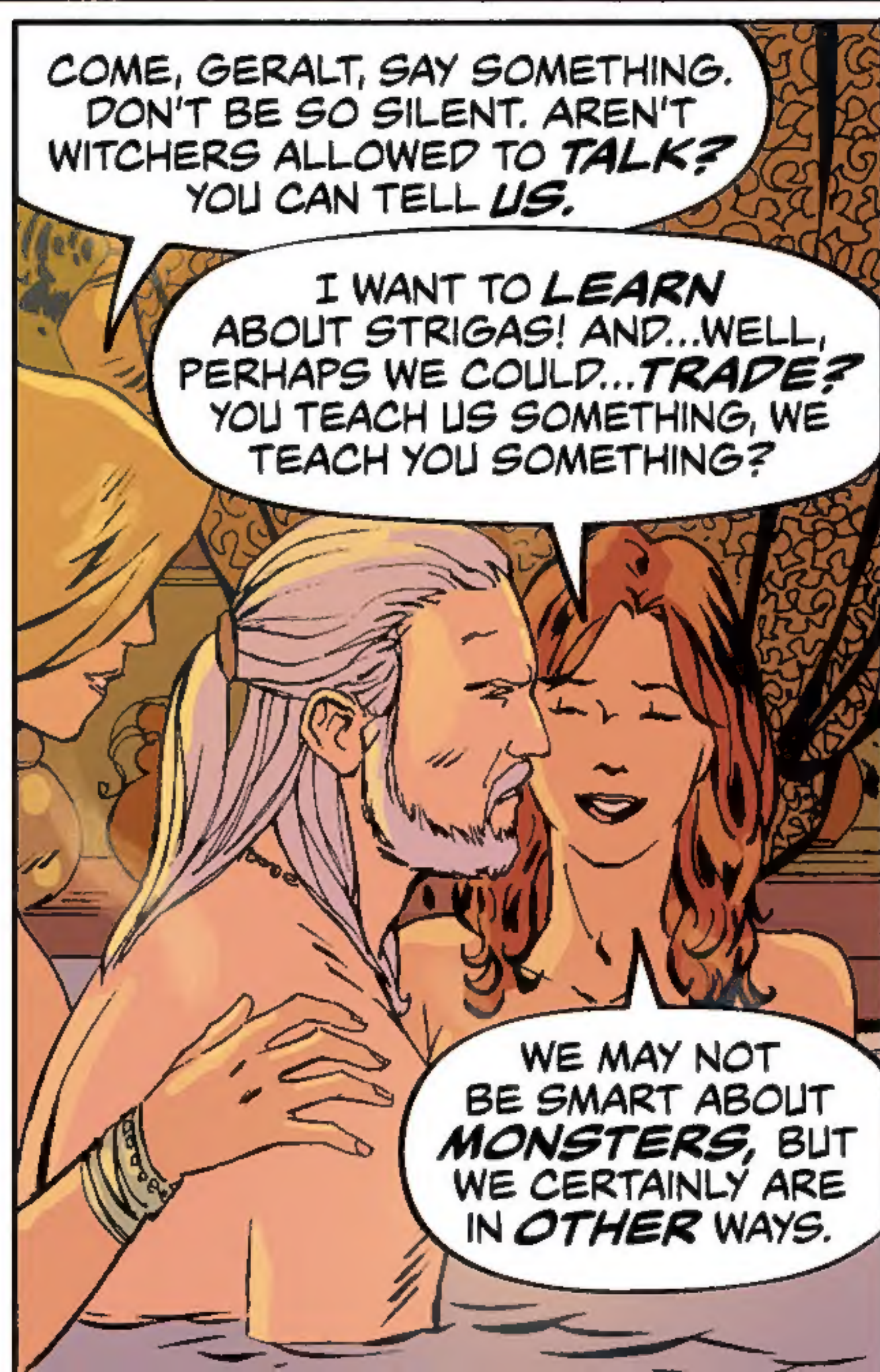
I'VE HEARD A STRIGA IS LIKE A **HORSE** BUT HAS **TWO HEADS**. IS IT TRUE?



AND HUMAN HANDS INSTEAD OF HOOVES, WITH STRONG FINGERS THAT **SHRED** YOU IF YOU CAN'T ANSWER A RIDDLE.

ARE WE **RIGHT**? ARE WE **CLOSE**?

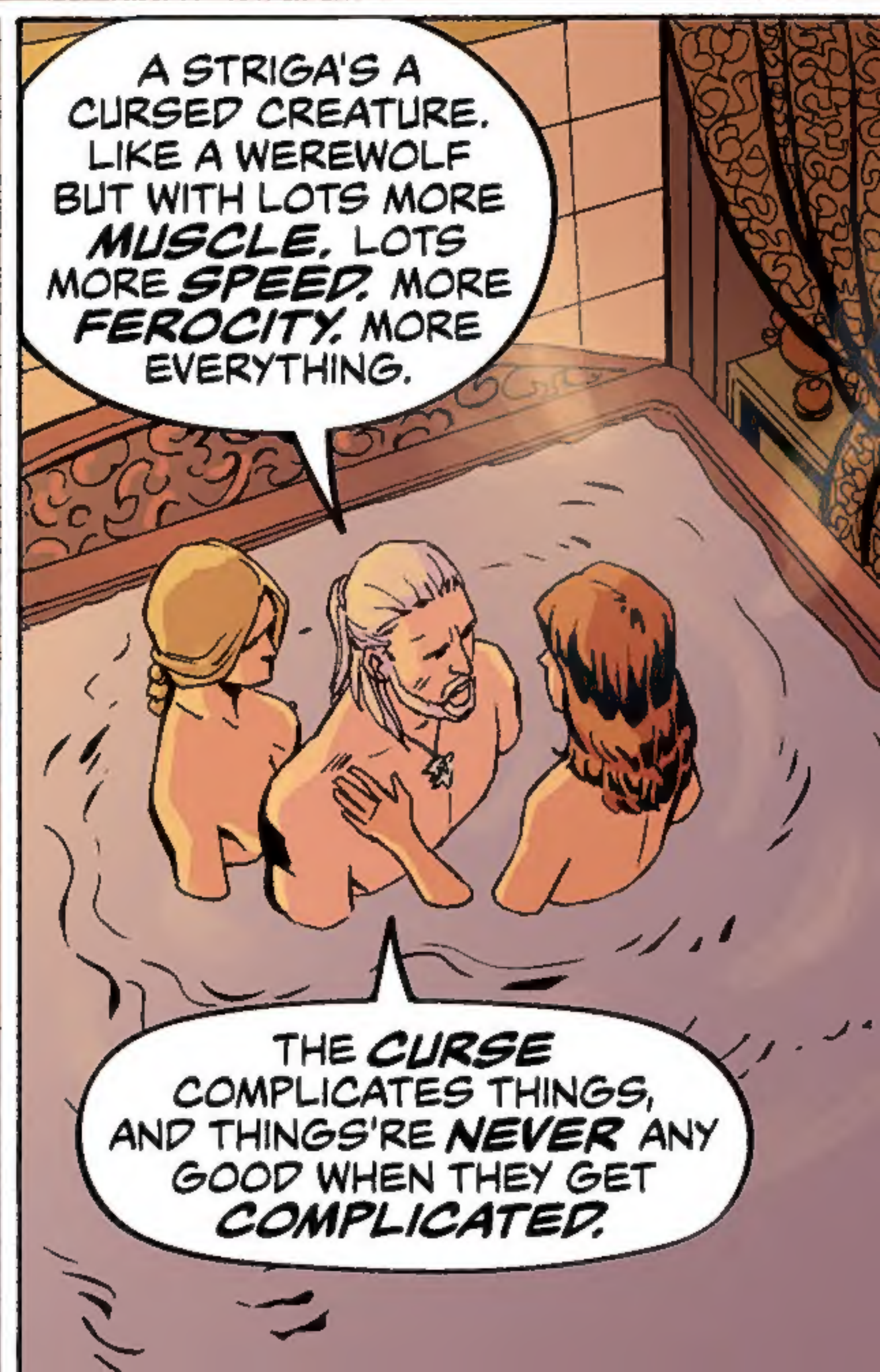
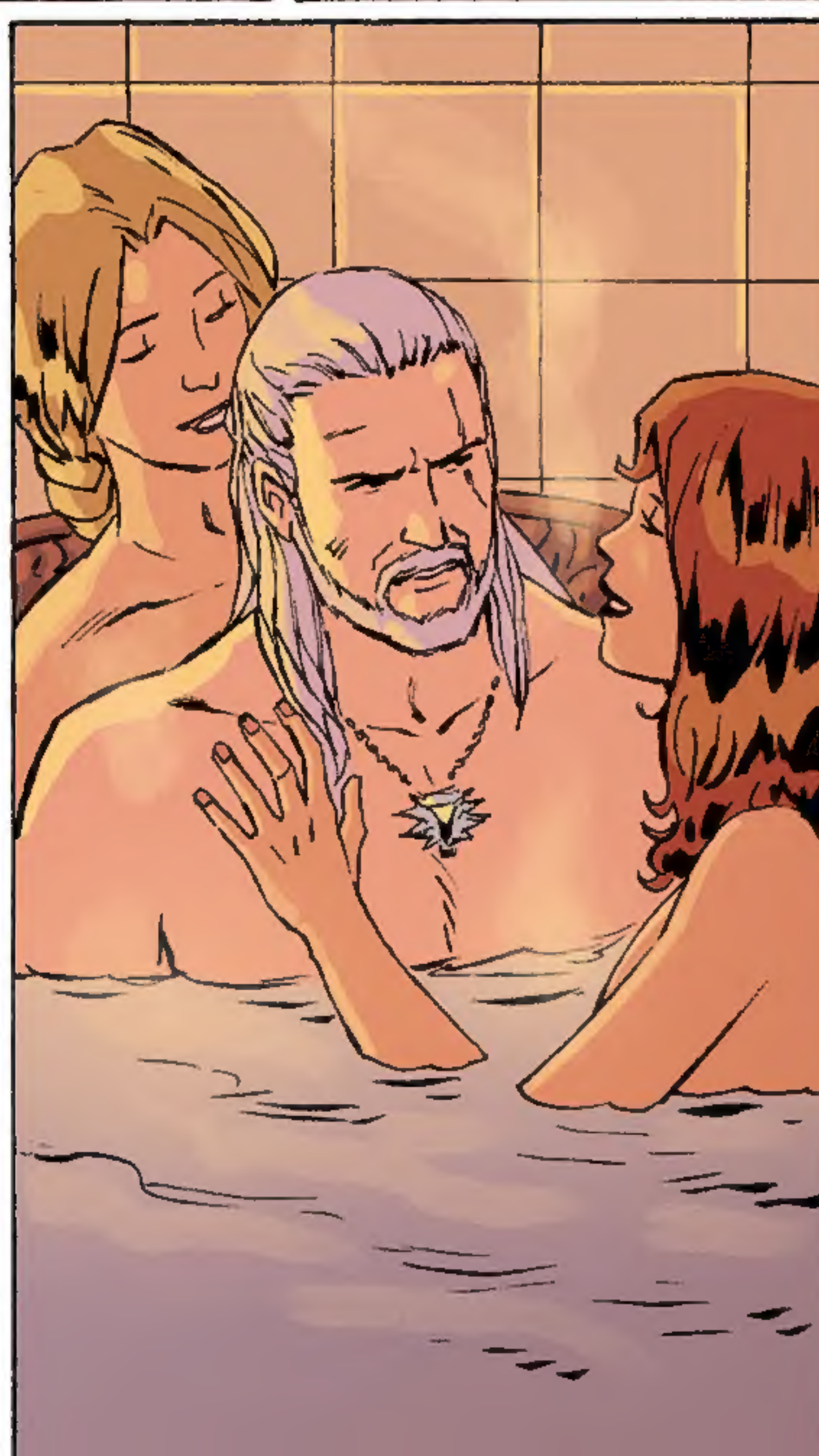
WHAT IS A **STRIGA**?



COME, GERALT, SAY SOMETHING. DON'T BE SO SILENT. AREN'T WITCHERS ALLOWED TO **TALK**? YOU CAN TELL **US**.

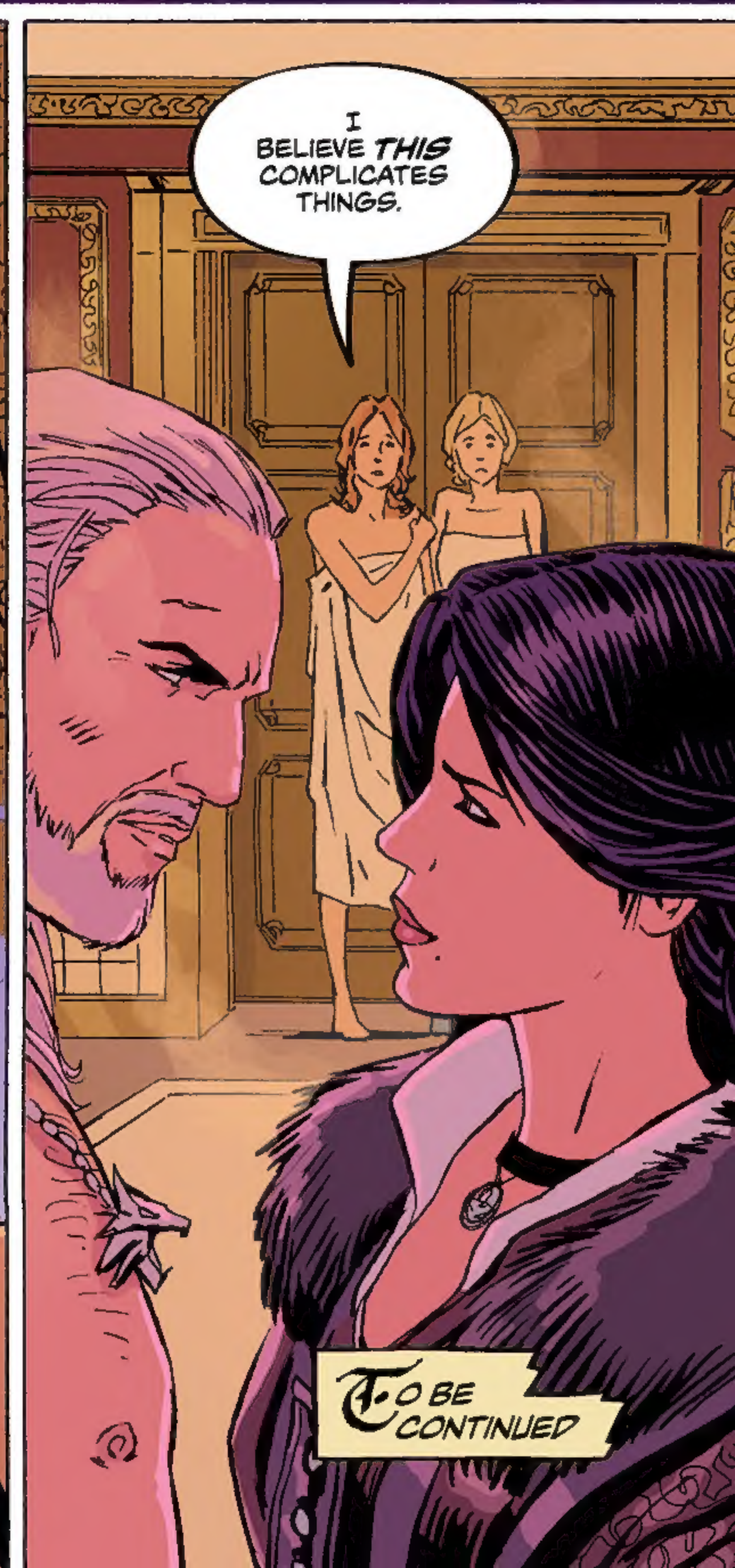
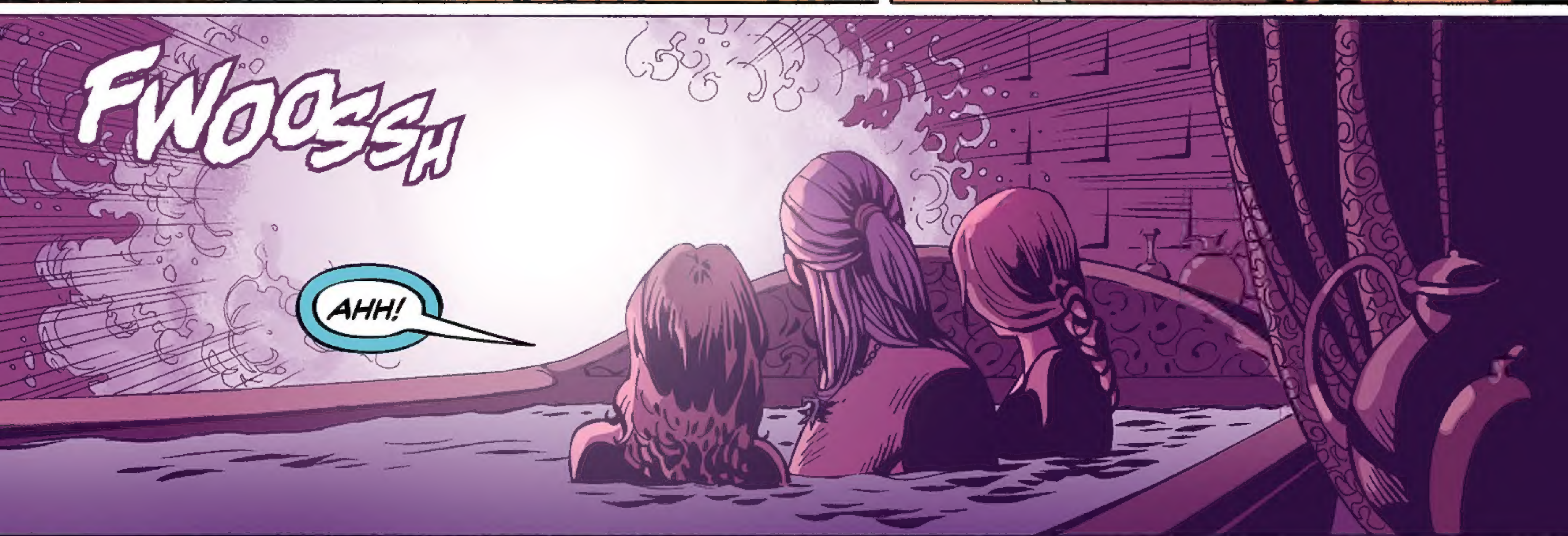
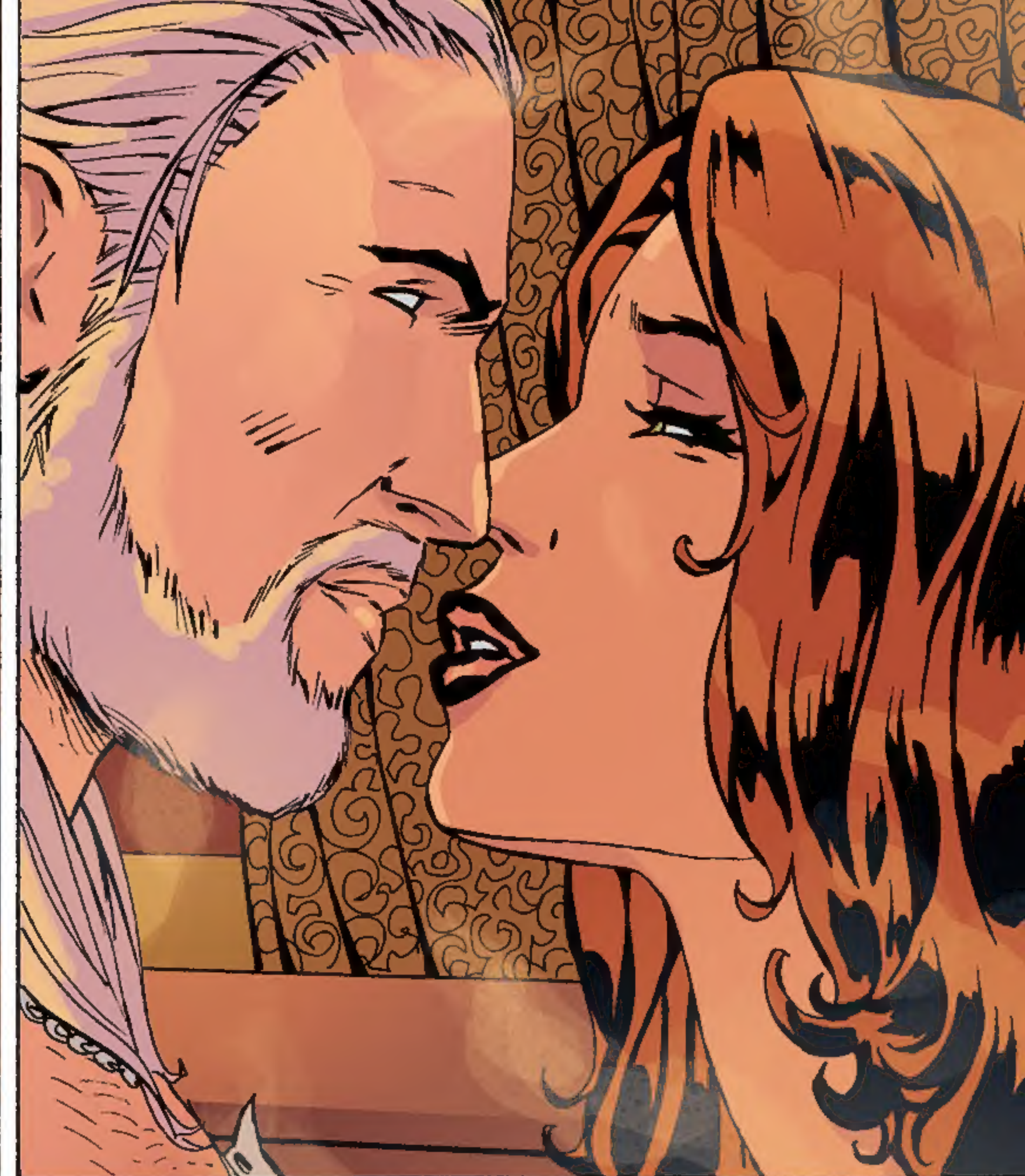
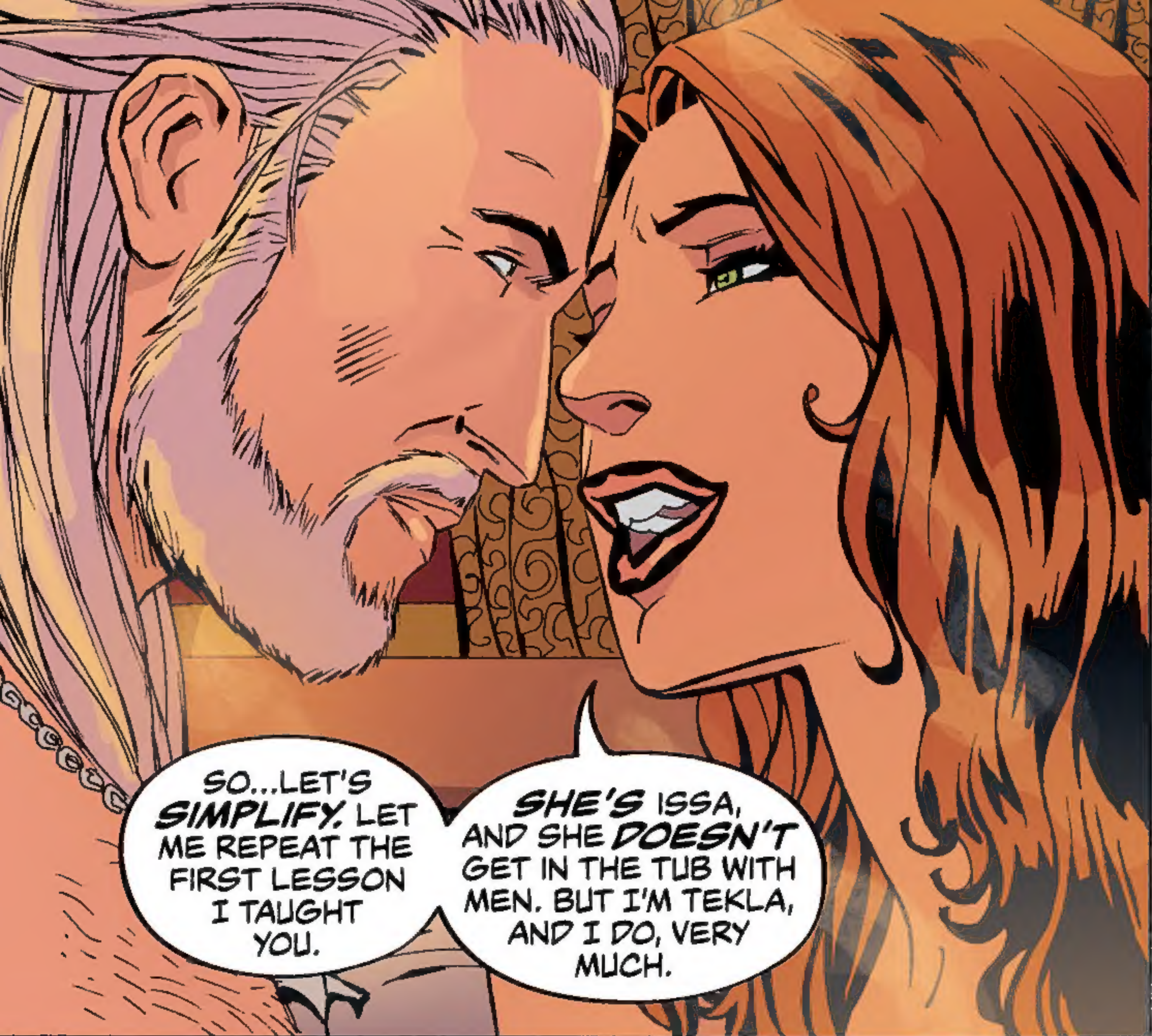
I WANT TO **LEARN** ABOUT STRIGAS! AND...WELL, PERHAPS WE COULD...**TRADE**? YOU TEACH US SOMETHING, WE TEACH YOU SOMETHING?

WE MAY NOT BE SMART ABOUT **MONSTERS**, BUT WE CERTAINLY ARE IN **OTHER** WAYS.



A STRIGA'S A CURSED CREATURE. LIKE A WEREWOLF BUT WITH LOTS MORE **MUSCLE**. LOTS MORE **SPEED**. MORE **FEROCITY**. MORE EVERYTHING.

THE **CURSE** COMPLICATES THINGS, AND THINGS'RE **NEVER** ANY GOOD WHEN THEY GET **COMPLICATED**.



TO BE
CONTINUED

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN...
THIS MONSTER!"

